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(HANSARD)

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY-THIRD YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1993–94

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OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-THIRD YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES VOLUME 242

TENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1993-94

House of Commons

Monday 25 April 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Montgomeryshire

1. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received in support of the retention of Montgomeryshire as a principal local authority.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones): Since publication of the White Paper on local government in Wales, we have received more than 280 letters, more than 4,300 pre-printed leaflets and a petition carrying 16 signatures in favour of a Montgomeryshire unitary authority.

Mr. Hughes: Will the Minister join me in congratulating the Standing Committee considering the Local Government (Wales) Bill, which voted by a significant majority to give unitary status to Montgomeryshire—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is referring to a Standing Committee that has not yet reported to the House. I am sure that he knows that, until a Committee has reported, we do not discuss its proceedings on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Hughes: Will the Minister respond to press reports that there is now a significant majority of opinion among relevant hon. Members on both sides of the House in favour of the retention of Montgomeryshire as a unitary authority together with the other two parts of the county of Powys? Will he ensure that that opinion is sustained as the majority opinion of the House at later stages when the matter is considered? Those involved can then plan, on the basis of unitary status, to give the best of services to the people of that historic and significant county in the centre of Wales.

Mr. Jones: My right hon. Friends and I remain convinced that the Bill provides the best arrangements for local government in Wales, particularly for Powys and for Montgomeryshire. There will be much more decision making by local councillors in Montgomeryshire than at present, and that will be a better arrangement. Of course, we will reflect further before Report.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Is my hon. Friend prepared to consider further the issue of financial autonomy, which causes much concern in the county of Montgomeryshire and also in the two counties that I represent, Breconshire and Radnorshire? Will he tell members of the Committee whether he is prepared to address the issues in an open-minded way?

Mr. Jones: We have already addressed the issues in an open-minded way, and the proposals for the shire committees—especially for Montgomeryshire, Radnorshire and Breconshire—represent a far better arrangement than exists at present. The authorities would be provided with a block grant, probably on the basis of a standard spending assessment-style arrangement, in respect of 100 per cent. of their finances. That is the best way forward.

Mr. Ron Davies: It is a pity that the Secretary of State, who has responsibility for these matters, is not answering these questions, because this is important. Any proposals that the Under-Secretary may have for strengthening financial devolution will cause considerable resentment, particularly in the boroughs, and any gain that he gets from

devolution in Montgomery will be more than offset by opposition elsewhere. May I press the hon. Gentleman on the point about Montgomeryshire? A substantial majority of Welsh Members of all parties represented in the House are of the opinion that the proposals for Powys are wrong. If the majority view is that Montgomeryshire, Breconshire and Radnorshire should remain as unitary authorities, will the Under-Secretary accept the wishes of Welsh Members of Parliament?

Mr. Jones: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman is factually right in his claim about the majority of all political parties wanting to go down the road that he suggests. The financial and other arrangements that we propose are far better and they are there for every part of Wales. Other parts of Wales besides the three historic counties of Powys could well choose to avail themselves of the arrangements for decentralisation that we are building in. The new arrangements will come to be regarded as much superior throughout Wales.

Labour Statistics

2. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the level of unemployment in Wales at the latest available date; and what was the percentage unemployment rate.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. John Redwood): Seasonally adjusted, the number of claimants unemployed in Wales in March 1994 was 125,300, representing a rate of 9.9 per cent. of the work force.

Mr. Hughes: Has the Minister considered the proposed closure of the Compton Webb factory in Newport, which for more than 40 years has made uniforms for the military and other public services? Why do the Government continue to give orders to that firm, given that its production is increasingly being transferred to north Africa while our people are being put on social security? Does it have something to do with the fact that the parent company, Coats Viyella, is a regular contributor to Tory party funds?

Mr. Redwood: Of course not. The Ministry of Defence awards contracts on the basis of good value for money. Like the hon. Gentleman, I hope that we can make more things in Wales and meet more of the MOD's requirements. I note that the hon. Gentleman did not mention the fact that unemployment was down 5,751 in the 12 months to March 1994 or the major assistance that his area receives from the urban programme, in Welsh Development Agency cash and from the special development scheme. We are keen to promote more business in his area. I hope that he will work with us because around Wales we are having great success in generating the jobs people want. It is about time that Opposition Members welcomed that.

Dr. Spink: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that inward investment is the key to driving down unemployment in this area of the country and that the Government's policies of providing deregulation, low inflation and low interest rates are attracting inward investment? Will he continue those policies?

Mr. Redwood: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. What a successful year—another successful year—Wales has had. Provisional figures for 1993-94 show £190 million of investment from the rest of the United Kingdom, £356 million from north America, £130 million from the far east and £88 million from the rest of Europe. That brought about 14,000 new and safeguarded jobs to Wales. We need much more such investment and we shall continue to promote it actively. We also want more home-grown jobs. That is also a central policy which the Government are pursuing.

Mr. Alnger: Is the Secretary of State aware that this afternoon the management of the Pembrokeshire NHS trust will inform 55 members of its staff that they are redundant and that it will seek another 45 redundancies over a short period? Does he accept what that management says—that the cause of those redundancies is the fact that the Welsh Office has not funded the 2.9 per cent. pay rise that nurses and doctors rightly received? Will he investigate the particular circumstances that have caused those 100 jobs to be lost in Pembrokeshire and the likely impact on other trusts and health authorities throughout Wales of the Welsh Office refusing to pay for the 2.9 per cent. pay rise?

Mr. Redwood: I do not accept the reason; it was not underfunding of the pay rise. I believe that there will be redundancies and reductions in posts at that trust. I believe that they will be in administrative and managerial posts, not in medical care posts, as the hon. Gentleman insinuates. I believe that the redundancies are unique to that trust and are not spreading to other trusts. That implies that the redundancies are to do with the management of that trust. I am sorry that some people will lose their jobs. It is important that it is done in a way that does not damage medical care. That is the clear message that I send to all trusts around Wales. We want the maximum amount of money spent on patient care, which is what I believe the Pembrokeshire trust is trying to do.

Mr. Murphy: Is the Secretary of State aware that—in addition to the devastating news about the job losses in Pembrokeshire—130 men at the Avesta steelworks in my constituency are to lose their jobs, which will be dispersed to Sheffield and Sweden? What advice will he personally give to my constituents and those made jobless in Pembrokeshire today, who now face either the dole or work in lower-paid, often part-time, jobs?

Mr. Redwood: Once again, the Opposition are concentrating on the bad news and not looking at the fact that we are generating more jobs than we are losing. Of course I am sad for the hon. Gentleman's constituents, but there is a process of change under way that no Government in the world can stop: fashions and demands change. It is important that we carry on succeeding for Wales and promoting Wales. Why does not the hon. Gentleman mention TRW Steering Systems, which announced today 400 new safeguarded jobs at its plant, with a £10 million investment? Why does not he mention the good news from Betws colliery, where a management buy-out is going ahead to bring back 90 jobs? Why does not he mention the Calsonic research and development project, which I was able to initiate two weeks ago? That is people backing Wales and giving Wales the jobs that it needs.

Housing

3. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to promote the private rented housing market.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The opportunities provided by the Housing Act 1988, together with Welsh Office support, have already achieved an 18 per cent. increase in private rented housing between 1990 and 1992.

Mr. Thurnham: Is my hon. Friend aware that private rented housing makes a much greater contribution to housing need in most other countries than it does in Britain? Does he welcome the Opposition's somewhat belated recognition of the fact that that sector badly needs a boost?

Mr. Jones: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. The Opposition's recognition always seems to be belated; my hon. Friend could have described it as a death-bed repentance. The difference between the two parties is that there is a recognition of reality on the Conservative Benches, but a lack of it on the Opposition Benches.

I have referred to the 18 per cent. increase in private rented housing and we shall do even better than that. The last census showed that Wales is an increasingly better-housed nation, and we should make the best use of that housing.

Mr. Dafis: Will the Minister nip in the bud any idea that housing association grant should be made available to private developers and landlords? Does he accept that that would be a misuse of public funds and would lead to increased rents in what we term social housing, where rent levels are already causing concern to Tai Cymru?

Mr. Jones: I cannot accept such a blinkered approach to housing. We should remain open to all possibilities for making the greatest use of taxpayers' money to achieve the greatest provision of social housing. The hon. Gentleman might care to reflect warmly on what has already been achieved. Since the inception of Housing for Wales, there has been a 100,000 increase in provision.

European Community

4. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the importance to the Welsh economy of the United Kingdom's membership of the European Community.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): The United Kingdom's membership of the European Community has given Wales access to a market of more than 346 million consumers and has enhanced Wales's attractiveness to inward investors looking for a base within the Community. In the past five years' almost 400 inward investment projects from overseas have been recorded in Wales, forecasting the creation or safeguarding of more than 41,000 jobs and representing a capital investment of more than £3 billion.

Mr. Williams: Why should the people of Wales be denied the rights to consultation, employment protection and equality between men and women, as enshrined in the social chapter and adopted by our 11 partners in the European Union? Why do the Government condemn the British work force to second-rate terms of employment?

Sir Wyn Roberts: Our exemption from the social chapter, which was negotiated by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, is most important to the Welsh economy. The imposition of the social chapter would cause unemployment. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said, what the Welsh economy needs is more inward investment to provide more jobs. Wales has done well in that respect in the past and will do so in the future.

Mr. Roger Evans: My right hon. Friend has dealt with the importance of inward investment. How much assistance is Wales obtaining from the European Union structural funds? Can he give us an indication of the importance of that assistance?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am glad to assure my hon. Friend that we have done well under the new structural funds. As he knows, industrial south Wales has objective 2 status and can expect £146 million between 1994 and 1996. Rural Wales has secured objective 5b status and can expect £143 million over the same period.

Mr. Morgan: Does the Minister nevertheless agree that the evidence given to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry—that low wages do not make an economy competitive—is exceptionally important to Wales, as we are so dependent on multinational companies with headquarters in mainland Europe? Does he also agree with observations that formed part of the evidence to the Committee—that there are weaknesses in basic literacy and numeracy in Wales, with German school children aged 15 two years ahead of our children in mathematics? We cannot go on relying on low wages or we will be condemning our workers to permanent pauperdom in Tory sweatshops.

Sir Wyn Roberts: But the hon. Gentleman will know that many factories are in Wales precisely because it is the best place in the European Community for them to invest. The fact that our wages are low compared to those in the United Kingdom and Europe is certainly taken into account in decisions about the location of factories and investments from overseas. Many countries in Europe envy us because production costs in Wales are lower than theirs.

Agriculture

5. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from farming unions on the implications of general agreement on tariffs and trade reforms for the future of agriculture in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend and I are aware of the assessment of the implications of the GATT agreement published by the National Farmers Union, but have not received any direct representations on the matter.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister accept that GATT is about free trade and that the future of Welsh farming is about getting Welsh products into markets without any discrimination? In those circumstances, will he make it clear to our German colleagues that there is no evidence to show that any beef from Wales has entered the markets affected by BSE? Indeed, the safeguards that we have put in place prevent that from happening. If the Germans persist in going down that road, will the Welsh Office initiate legal action over unfair trade practice?

Sir Wyn Roberts: The hon. Gentleman will know that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and others have pointed that out to the German Government on more than one occasion. Of course, GATT is intended to facilitate the promotion of free trade, and we are likely to do rather well under the agreement in Wales. Welsh lamb is already doing well: one quarter of the lamb exported from this country is Welsh lamb.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the prosperity of Welsh agriculture is dependent on the prosperity of its customers? Does he also agree that the GATT agreement will lead to greater prosperity in the world, the United Kingdom and Wales and that it is therefore good for Welsh agriculture?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I fully agree. That is why the GATT agreement was so important for this country: it is designed to increase world trade, and we will benefit from it. In Wales, we stand to gain, and we certainly do not share the NFU's somewhat gloomy view of the prospects. We share the Commission's view, which is far brighter.

Mr. Denzil Davies: This question may be about GATT and agriculture, but has the Welsh Office studied the effect of GATT on Welsh manufacturing industry, bearing in mind that wages in the far east are much lower—

Madam Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman has admitted that his remarks are barely related to the question, which concerns farming and the future of agriculture. Can he do any better?

Mr. Davies: The Minister mentioned the fact that customers are very important. If Welsh manufacturing industry is destroyed by GATT, there will be no one around to buy the Welsh lamb to which he referred. So —in view of the importance of Welsh manufacturing industry to Welsh agriculture—what studies has the Welsh Office carried out into the effects of GATT on Welsh manufacturing, bearing in mind the difference in wage levels in industry in Wales and the far east?

Sir Wyn Roberts: We certainly stand to gain from the GATT agreement, as I said. The right hon. Gentleman will know that that is why the agreement was negotiated and why it was so important for us and for other countries. Any analysis of prospects is inevitably complex because it involves certain anticipations and assumptions about the course of world trade prices in coming years.

Mr. Ron Davies: I think that the Minister understands that there is widespread apprehension in the Welsh farming community about the GATT agreement signed last week and about future common agricultural policy reform. Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that strong environmental and social, as well as economic, reasons exist for maintaining Welsh agriculture? Does he accept that the decline in the traditional family farm and the numbers of young people entering Welsh agriculture are symptoms of the failure of his Government's policy?

As the green box and the CAP reform compensation measures are exempt from GATT, why does not the right hon. Gentleman take advantage of the fact that his Department is responsible for agriculture, the environment, rural affairs and employment? Using the opportunities presented by his office, why does not he develop a long-term strategy for the future development of the Welsh countryside?

Sir Wyn Roberts: We do, indeed, take advantage of every opportunity afforded to us by the special standing of the Welsh Office and the fact that we are responsible for agriculture, the economy and the environment. It is very much in our own interests and in our mind to devise a secure, long-term future for agriculture, involving support for the environment. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that that is why we established the Countryside Council for Wales and why we are involved in agri-environmental support. He will also be aware that the hill livestock compensatory allowance and so on exist not simply to offer agricultural support, but for the well-being of the environment.

Vale Of Glamorgan Unitary Authority

6. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received from people and organisations in the communities of Ewenny, Saint Bride's Major and Wick in favour of his proposals to put them in the proposed Vale of Glamorgan unitary authority.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Five since the White Paper, besides representations from the Vale defence committee.

Mr. Griffiths: Does the Minister accept that the fact that there were five responses in favour as compared with more than 100 against, and that 75 per cent. of the residents of the three communities responded to an electoral ballot in which about 85 per cent. said that they wanted to stay with Bridgend, should be enough to persuade the Government to accept the premise of their own White Paper about taking local wishes into account? Does the Minister therefore accept that the three communities of Ewenny, Saint Bride's Major and Wick should be allowed, even at this late stage, to have their overwhelming demands to stay with the Bridgend unitary authority met?

Mr. Jones: I would also mention that we have had substantial representations from the Vale of Glamorgan borough council, Colwinston community council, Llandough community council and Penllyn—essentially, the other members of the family, who are looking forward to being joined by those three communities. The communities will not lose any facilities and I believe will feel at home in a more sympathetic authority that is much more in tune with rural communities.

Mr. Sweeney: Does my hon. Friend acknowledge that there is considerable support for the Government's proposals in the Vale of Glamorgan and that the Vale of Glamorgan will warmly welcome those three communities? In the light of the comparative records of the different unitary authorities, it is likely that those three communities will benefit from significantly lower council tax charges under a Vale unitary authority.

Mr. Jones: My hon. Friend is right about the warm response for those three communities from the Vale of Glamorgan. He is probably also absolutely right when he says that, in future, the residents of those communities will enjoy a lower council tax.

Public Appointments

7. **Mr. Hanson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much was paid in respect of their duties to board members of non-departmental public bodies appointed by him in 1992-93.

Mr. Redwood: Board members received £703,934 in 1992-93.

Mr. Hanson: I thank the Secretary of State for that answer. That figure will undoubtedly rise. Will the right hon. Gentleman be happy for an increasing number of people to be paid for as part of the unelected state when the money could be diverted to provide democratic control of the services in question? Several people are now earning in excess of £50,000 to £60,000. Is the Secretary of State happy with that?

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman's attack has backfired on him. I welcome the fact that the Labour party is campaigning, in its new guise, for fewer quangos, but I find that about as credible as the Welsh rugby team saying that they are now teetotal. The Labour party has never opposed quangos in its life—and has usually recommended the establishment of many more. I also reject the idea that the Labour party is putting around that it is my aim to have more people on quango boards than elected councillors. That is quite untrue. It also shows how much scorn the Labour party has for community councils. It has ignored 730 of those as well as miscalculating the figures so as to try to suggest that there are or will soon be more quango members than there are elected councillors. That is also quite untrue.

I believe that elected people have a strong role to play in our democracy, but local authorities and central Governments of all persuasions from time to time delegate functions to boards of experienced people. We ensure that they are properly monitored and we report back to the House or they report back to their Labour-controlled council chambers.

Mr. Richards: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, in spite of the clamour on the Opposition Benches against quangos, the Labour party has never once voted against the establishing of a new quango and neither has it indicated that, in the unlikely event of a Labour Government ever being formed, it would wish to abolish any quangos?

Mr. Redwood: I think that my hon. Friend is right and I look forward to the proposals to abolish quangos. I hope that the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) will send me a little list because we might be able to find that we can do business across the Floor of the House.

Mr. Llwyd: Does the Secretary of State realise that the Conservative party in north Wales has sunk into fourth place in the race for the European election? In spite of that, does he deplore, as I do, the political statements being made by the chairman of the Gwynedd area health authority, who has suddenly come out in his true colours? Is not it disgraceful that the only qualification that he had to do that job was his affiliation to the party?

Mr. Redwood: I deny that latter charge and on the former point I look forward to the real poll, because we often find that polls are extremely misleading.

I was amused that the hon. Gentleman's original question backfired, because it shows that the amount that we spend on Welsh quango board members is less than it is said that a single Member of the European Parliament costs.

Housing

8. **Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total level of public expenditure on housing in Wales in 1994-95.

Mr. Redwood: Government provision for Welsh housing programmes for 1994-95 is set at £634.9 million, an increase of £27 million over the plans for 1993-94.

Mr. Evans: Can my right hon. Friend inform the House of the proportion of the overall housing budget that is accounted for by housing benefit? Is he happy with that proportion and the growing proportion that goes towards housing benefit? What steps can be taken to ensure that more goes towards new housing provision rather than creating a situation in which many people on low wages find that they may well be priced out of housing association dwellings?

Mr. Redwood: The best way of tackling that problem is to encourage more jobs and higher incomes because they lift people out of housing benefit. On the supply side, obviously the right answer is to do what the Government are doing, which is to promote actively more housing schemes in suitable places, so that there is sufficient supply to meet the requirements for new family formation. The figures that I gave were figures for the amount of money available for those prime housing programmes of new build and improvement.

Mr. Barry Jones: Does the right hon. Gentleman recollect that I have presented to his Department a series of petitions calling for investment in aging housing stock? Will he therefore give a generous extra allocation to Alyn and Deeside district council, to enable it to modernise a series of aging council estates? Does he also realise that in cold weather many bedrooms are not habitable for young children, and that young mothers in my constituency are asking for central heating and new windows so that their homes may be fit to live in?

Mr. Redwood: Of course I want to see decent homes and I want to encourage councils to maintain and improve their stock, just as I wish to see a high-quality stock in the private sector and among the housing associations. As the hon. Gentleman knows, we work out the amounts of money by a formula that tries to take into account the requirements of each council and I, like him, am impatient to get on with the work. Many homes in Wales have been improved in the past 15 years. More homes need improvement and my hon. Friend can rest assured that money will be made available.

Mr. Llew Smith: Can the Minister tell me how those people in Wales who are unemployed or in low-paid part-time non-union jobs can purchase a home to start their family life?

Mr. Redwood: Some will be able to through the low-cost housing for sale programme that I am currently beefing up along with the housing institutions that operate in conjunction with the Welsh Office. It is the best form of tenure. It is so much better for people to reach retirement owning their home, knowing that they do not have to meet

an increasing rent bill out of their pension and, wherever possible, we encourage them to buy, because that is true social housing. Where that is not possible, we will ensure that there is subsidised housing for rent available or decent housing for rent with housing benefit.

Primary Schools

9. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much was spent per pupil in primary schools in Wales in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what was the figure for 1978-79, at constant prices.

Mr. Redwood: In 1992-93, current expenditure per pupil in primary schools in Wales was £1,590. The equivalent constant price figure for 1978-79 was £1,067. That is an increase of a massive 49 per cent. in real spending per pupil.

Sir David Knox: Does my right hon. Friend agree that those figures show an impressive increase in expenditure for primary school pupils in Wales? Is he satisfied that that increased expenditure is reflected in an improvement in standards?

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. Friend is right to say that it is a big increase. It reflects generous increases in teachers' wages and decent educational provision in our primary schools. Like him, I want even higher standards, and I am not happy that 28 per cent. of seven-year-olds in primary schools in Wales are achieving only level 1 in arithmetic whereas they should be achieving level 2, which is the right standard for seven-year-olds. That means that we are still letting too many seven-year-olds down and I have asked inspectors to pay attention to teaching methods, to see what succeeds and what does not so that we can spread best practice more widely.

Visitors

10. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the number of visitors to Wales in 1993; and what was the estimated level of expenditure by them.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Figures for 1993 are not yet available, but the most recent figures show that, for Wales as a whole, the volume of domestic business in 1992 amounted to 8.3 million trips by United Kingdom holidaymakers, just over 40 million overnight stays and a total value of £930 million. The volume and value of overseas tourism in 1991 amounted to 0.62 million trips, 4.8 million overnight stays and a total value of £128 million. In addition, day visits accounted for 0.32 million trips with a value of £229 million.

Mr. Coombs: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that information. But when will the 1993 figures be available, given that the last of the 1993 visitors must have gone home by now? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the number of visitors from outside the United Kingdom is of the greatest importance to Welsh tourism? What steps is the Welsh tourist board taking to increase the number of overseas visitors?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am sure that my hon. Friend agrees that the figures that I gave were somewhat detailed. The figures for 1993 will also be detailed and they therefore take a bit of gathering and analysis. On overseas visitors, the tourist board's overseas marketing strategy has identified some 10 countries to be targeted and, once that has happened, we hope that the number of overseas visitors to Wales will increase by about 8 per cent. per annum in the next three years. We shall spend more next year than we spent this year on attracting visitors from overseas.

Dr. Howells: Does the Minister think that visitors to Wales will be encouraged by the sighting of a stinking asphalt cording plant on Little Garth in the Taff's Well gorge, where most people who go up into the valleys of south Wales start their journeys? Will he do what he can in the Welsh Office to help local authorities to overturn the old development orders that chain them to allowing companies like Redlands to put those unnecessary plants in those beautiful places?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I understand that that matter is being considered by Mid-Glamorgan, which is the planning authority. When I last went up the Taff valley, I looked carefully at the surroundings and I found them most attractive, despite some of the industrial development in the area.

Lambing

11. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the effect of the weather upon the 1994 lambing season in upland Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: It is too soon to assess the overall effect of this winter's weather on the lambing season. Lambing is still in progress on many upland farms where the most recent spell of warmer, drier weather should have eased some of the problems.

Mr. Carlile: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his answer. Given the terrible weather of late March and early April, will he keep an open mind? If it can be shown that this year's losses were higher than could reasonably have been expected—taking into account business risk—will he then consider the possibility of special weather aid payments?

Sir Wyn Roberts: That is why we have special payments—particularly for upland farmers, who must contend with special problems. Those difficulties are taken into account in the autumn review, after we have considered exactly how problems such as the current ones involving lambing have affected farm incomes.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Ministerial Visits

22. **Mr. Gapes:** To ask the Attorney-General when he next plans to visit Northern Cyprus to discuss extradition.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Derek Spencer): My right hon. and learned Friend has no such plans.

Mr. Gapes: Is it not about time that the Government put some serious pressure on the Denktash regime in northern Cyprus, directly and through Turkey, to secure Mr. Asil Nadir's extradition back to this country—or is it true to say that the £440,000 that Mr. Nadir gave the Conservative party is now reaping its rewards?

The Solicitor-General: The Department of Trade and Industry drew that question to the attention of the Serious Fraud Office at the beginning of its inquiry. Having considered all the issues, the SFO decided to focus its attention on the frauds that are at present before the court.

I emphasise that the SFO—which is an independent prosecuting authority—made its decisions without reference to Ministers or to the Law Officers. We would welcome any pressure from any quarter that would persuade Mr. Nadir to return to this country and stand trial.

Mr. Booth: Does not the law of extradition allow any fugitive from justice to surrender voluntarily? In this case, should not every encouragement be given to Asil Nadir —who is currently besmirching the fine island of Cyprus and its fine people—to come back voluntarily and stand trial?

The Solicitor-General: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. The trial was fixed for last autumn, and Mr. Nadir did not attend; we are anxious that he should make an early return and stand trial.

Mr. Skinner: Can the Minister tell us whether the Tory party has handed back Asil Nadir's £440,000 gift to anyone?

The Solicitor-General: The hon. Gentleman must have been distracted: I answered that question a few moments ago.

Serious Fraud Office

23. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Attorney-General what steps are being taken to improve the effectiveness of the Serious Fraud Office.

The Attorney-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): The Serious Fraud Office keeps its working procedures under review with a stocktaking after each case. The Government are also considering important recommendations by the Royal Commission on criminal justice, including the case for more detailed advance disclosure by the defence.

Mr. Mans: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, where possible, defence counsel should give a clear indication of their line of defence at the beginning of trials, in their opening statements, so that juries do not have to wait many months to find out?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend has picked up an important point, which was made by the royal commission itself: once the defendant knows precisely what case he must meet, it is right that he should give a sufficient indication of his defence so that the jury knows at the outset what issues are to be tried and to be decided by it, rather than having to wait for many weeks—sometimes months—to find out.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Attorney-General agree that the problem with the Serious Fraud Office has always been the over-complicated indictments that it prefers? Should it not simplify those indictments, and go for the simple, main criteria of criminality?

The Attorney-General: The problem that is always faced in such complex cases is to prefer the right charges so as to focus on the true criminality without either over-complicating the issue or so narrowing the focus that justice cannot be done. The Serious Fraud Office has made great improvements in recent years in this matter, as its conviction record shows.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

24. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement about the use of public interest immunity certificates.

The Attorney-General: Public interest immunity certificates play an important part in the common law system whereby the courts determine the balance between competing public interests.

Mrs. Roche: If Lord Justice Scott finds that the Attorney-General was wrong to advise Ministers to use public interest immunity certificates in the Matrix Churchill case, will the Attorney-General resign?

The Attorney-General: Lord Justice Scott's consideration of these matters involved a serious consideration of common law, on which there is a great deal of judicial authority. For a serious and thoughtful consideration of the matter, I recommend that the hon. Lady reads carefully the evidence before the inquiry, which she will find illuminating.

Mr. Matthew Banks: Will my right hon. and learned Friend tell the House on how many occasions in recent years a judge has had to decide which documents that are the subject of a public interest immunity certificate should be disclosed to the defence? Was it on each and every occasion?

The Attorney-General: Without any doubt, I can tell my hon. Friend that on every occasion when a judge in a criminal case has to decide whether documents that are the subject of a public interest immunity certificate should be disclosed, the judge will read the documents, consider them carefully and then decide. The notion that the system is designed to suppress documents is completely inaccurate.

Mr. Fraser: Will the Attorney-General answer the question that he felt unable to answer earlier? Why was the special nature of the certificate given by the President of the Board of Trade not drawn to the attention of the judge or defence counsel? What steps is he taking to ensure that that sort of lapse does not occur again? The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that he would resign if he was criticised by the Scott inquiry. How many of the Ministers who gave evidence to the inquiry share the Chancellor's view?

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman is misinformed. The special nature of the certificates signed by the President of the Board of Trade was expressly drawn to the attention of the judge by counsel—it leapt from the page. Nobody reading that specially designed certificate who had any understanding of the subject of public interest immunity could fail to realise that it was a special certificate designed to leave the decision on whether the documents should be disclosed to the defence to the judge.

Mr. Maclennan: Pending the report of the Scott inquiry, what arrangements has the Attorney-General made to strengthen his position when he has to advise his colleagues so that we do not experience problems in the interim?

The Attorney-General: I had the benefit of the advice of junior counsel to the Treasury, now a High Court judge, and a leading Queen's counsel, then the chairman of the Criminal Bar Association. My advice was given with great care and with the best possible backing.

Mr. Anthony Alliss

27. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the case of the late Mr. Anthony Alliss.

The Solicitor-General: Two persons charged with the murder of Anthony Alliss were acquitted on the direction of the trial judge at Bristol Crown court on 24 June 1991. After causing extensive inquiries to be made into the conduct of the prosecution, I am entirely satisfied that it was conducted to a high standard.

Mr. Knapman: I appreciate that my hon. and learned Friend cannot comment in detail on individual cases, but he will understand that, in this particular case, we have a body, an unfinished case and therefore no conviction. In the light of those circumstances, one must understand the feelings of the family involved. Will my hon. and learned Friend please try to ensure, however, that those circumstances do not occur again?

The Solicitor-General: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the assiduous way in which he has pursued his constituent's interests in this case, but the trial was conducted by a High Court judge and the Crown was represented by a very experienced leader on the western circuit. After the judge had heard all the evidence, he concluded that it was not fit for the jury to consider. In a case of that sort, that is the end of the matter.

Public Interest Immunity

28. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Attorney-General what methods are available to alter the law and procedures for overcoming public interest immunity.

The Attorney-General: The law and procedures relating to public interest immunity are continually being developed by the courts. It is also open to Parliament to legislate on the subject.

Mr. Bottomley: Can my right hon. and learned Friend recollect any suggestion from the media or any Opposition party in the past two or three years for a change in the law or the procedures of public interest immunity certificates? If he cannot recollect any such suggestion—I certainly cannot—does not he think that they are merely trying to exploit a situation in which the law has been laid down by judges in court and duly followed?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend is entirely right to say that the law in this sphere is the common law laid down by the high judiciary in the courts. I cannot recall any constructive observation from the Opposition at all.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Non-governmental Organisations

29. **Mrs. Browning:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps the Overseas Development Administration has taken to improve dialogue with non-governmental organisations.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): The Overseas Development Administration recently helped establish a new network known as the British Non-Governmental Organisations for Development, or by the acronym BOND. We expect this to be an effective mechanism for non-governmental organisations to share information with the Government on how to improve the impact of overseas aid.

Mrs. Browning: Does my hon. Friend accept the grateful thanks of the Corona Society whose members recently accompanied me to see Baroness Chalker and who do an excellent job in many countries? Will my hon. Friend explain to the House how he sees the joint funding scheme helping those organisations which work in very difficult parts of the world?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Yes, I am happy to confirm what my hon. Friend says. She is also absolutely right to say that the joint funding scheme is extremely well thought of in the Overseas Development Administration. It has nearly doubled in the past five years and in the current year we plan to increase its funding by 14 per cent.

Dr. Howells: But has the Minister spoken to the non-governmental organisations Oxfam and Action Aid about the murder of their workers in Rwanda where 100,000 people have been slaughtered in the past two weeks? Why has Britain, which is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, agreed as part of the unanimous decision to reduce the number of peacekeeping troops in Rwanda from 2,700 to 270? Is there one level of compassion for our European friends in Bosnia and another for black Africans?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Every non-governmental organisation employee in Rwanda who wished to be evacuated has been. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is about to answer the next question on precisely that subject.

Madam Speaker: That is indeed another question, and we shall now move on to it.

Rwanda And Burundi

30. **Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures he will take to facilitate humanitarian relief to the victims of the conflicts in Rwanda and Burundi.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): Since February 1993, we have provided £12 million of emergency aid to Rwanda and Burundi, including our share of European Community assistance. In the past week, we have committed some £820,000 through British non-governmental organisations for those suffering in the present conflict.

Mr. Donohoe: That is all very well, but, as my party's Front-Bench spokesman just asked, as the United Nations security force is doing absolutely nothing but is, in fact, withdrawing from an area that requires its assistance, when will the Government put pressure on the United Nations to bring back its troops to prevent further slaughter?

Mr. Hurd: I am not sure how either hon. Gentleman supposes that maintaining a United Nations force on the original scale will help assuage those horrors. Have not they read the report by the Secretary-General on which the Security Council acted? The Security Council concluded, on the advice of the Secretary-General, that it was no longer possible for that United Nation force to carry out its mandate in the form expected. Therefore, as happened some months ago in Angola in a slightly similar situation, it was decided to run down the force. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that there is no magic in keeping troops there if there is nothing useful that they can do.

Mr. Lester: Will my right hon. Friend do everything that he can to assist the Organisation of African Unity in what has to be in the end a negotiated settlement—preferably negotiated by Rwanda's neighbours? One attempt has been made already to bring the parties together. Will we offer all our experience and assistance to enable that process to begin?

Mr. Hurd: Indeed, the initiative here is with the President of Tanzania. He called for a peace conference on Rwanda in Arusha on Saturday, but it did not take place in the form intended. He is renewing his efforts, and that must be right. The effort must be to bring an end to the fighting. That cannot be achieved, as has been proved, by the United Nations force on the ground. There must be an end to the fighting; in the meanwhile, we shall do all that we can to relieve the human suffering. That is what the Community is doing.

Uganda

31. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to provide aid to reduce the burden of Ugandan debt.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have provided more than £93 million in balance of payments support for Uganda's economic recovery programme since 1987, which has helped to ease the debt-servicing burden. We have also forgiven all Uganda's old aid debt to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Luff: Does my hon. Friend agree that his answer provides further evidence of Britain's excellent record on aid and debt relief to the poorest nations, such as Uganda? Does he also agree that for countries, such as Uganda, which face serious debts to multilateral institutions, similarly enlightened attitudes will be required from other countries, especially Japan?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My hon. Friend is right. The Prime Minister was responsible for the Trinidad terms which have given enormous relief to many countries, including Uganda. We very much hope that Japan will join any Paris club consensus for improving the existing terms. I should add that Japan implements the existing Trinidad terms with other creditors and has made clear that it has a commitment to help developing countries.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Given that Uganda is one of the five poorest countries in the world, how is it logical and justifiable that over the next five years, Uganda will be repaying £200 million to the International Monetary Fund, one of the richest institutions in the world? How can that be justified? If it cannot be justified, what can we do about it?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The fact is that Uganda is projected, over the years 1993-94 to 1995-96, to receive US $744 million from the World bank's special programme for Africa.

European Fund For Development

32. **Mr. Wells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress he is making in making the European Fund for Development more effective.

Mr. Hurd: We are working with the European Commission to improve the effectiveness of EC development expenditure, with some success so far. In the mid-term review of Lomé IV, we are seeking changes that will also improve effectiveness, notably by directing funds more to those countries that can make best use of them.

Mr. Wells: Is not it true that the bank is now paying more in overheads than it is disbursing? My right hon. Friend made vigorous representations at the bank board's recent meeting against that practice. When does he expect delivery of the European development fund programmes to exceed expenditure on overheads?

Mr. Hurd: I think that my hon. Friend and I are on slightly different tracks. I am answering a question about the European fund for development. I think that my hon. Friend is asking me about the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. I shall have to answer his question on the running costs of the EBRD at greater leisure.

Madam Speaker: I call Mr. Enright. Can he get it right? The question concerns the European fund for development.

Mr. Enright: On the European development fund, does the Foreign Secretary agree that it is a very good instrument for converting emergency aid into long-term aid? I think especially of Mozambique. The moment that it gets off the front pages, people stop considering long-term needs. The EDF is well geared to satisfy those needs. I hope that the Government are working along those lines.

Mr. Hurd: It is certainly true that the EDF shares many of the objectives of our bilateral aid programme. I am very struck by the increase in our commitment to the EDF; it was more than £440 million in 1992-93. It is a very large part of our multilateral aid which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, is growing as a proportion of the total. We need to be sure—surer than I am at the moment—that the priorities and effectiveness of the EDF are as great as those in our bilateral aid programme. That is why the mid-term review of Lomé IV is so important.

Aid Projects

33. **Mr. Matthew Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Overseas Development Administration ensures that all aid projects are assessed for their environmental sustainability.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: All projects are subject to environmental assessment according to the guidelines and procedures set out in the Overseas Development Administration manual of environmental appraisal.

Mr. Banks: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Will he give the House an assurance that the ODA will always undertake an environmental sustainability assessment before making a decision on an especial aid project and that, when that has taken place, the decision will be taken with due regard to all factors, including economic factors and the quality of the programme under consideration?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Yes. Sustainable development is a central aim of the aid programme in all that it does. Environmental impact assessments are always conducted before any aid project is undertaken. Indeed, I should also add that many aid projects are designed to improve the environment. For example, forestry conservation and management projects improve the environment.

Bosnia

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement about Bosnia. In response to the continued Bosnian Serb shelling of Gorazde and the horrifying civilian casualties, the United Nations Secretary-General wrote on 18 April to the Secretary-General of NATO, asking Dr. Wörner to obtain as soon as possible a decision of the North Atlantic Council to authorise the use of air strikes at UN request to protect the safe areas, as provided for in Security Council resolution 836.

The shelling of Gorazde continued unabated. The North Atlantic Council met on 20 April and decided that military advice should be sought urgently on the UN Secretary-General's request and that it should meet again on 22 April to take the necessary decisions. Senior Foreign Office and Ministry of Defence officials went to Washington to discuss additional proposals put forward by the United States. The Russian Government were kept informed of developments.

The United Nations Security Council met early on 22 April and passed its resolution 913, which called on the Bosnian Serbs and the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina to conclude an immediate ceasefire agreement under the auspices of UNPROFOR, condemned the Bosnian Serb shelling of Gorazde and demanded the withdrawal of Bosnian Serb forces to a distance to be agreed by UNPROFOR. The resolution also demanded the immediate release of all UN personnel and unimpeded freedom of movement for UNPROFOR.

When the North Atlantic Council met on 22 April, it authorised Commander-in-Chief, Southern Command, Admiral Smith, to conduct air strikes against Bosnian Serb heavy artillery and other military targets within a radius of 20 km from the centre of Gorazde unless the following occurred: Bosnian Serb attacks on Gorazde ceased immediately; Bosnian Serb forces pulled back 3 km from the centre of Gorazde by one minute past midnight on 24 April; UN forces were free to enter Gorazde; and medical evacuations were permitted.

The NATO Council took a further set of decisions on the same day. It established a military exclusion zone of 20 km around Gorazde, from which all heavy weapons must be withdrawn by one minute past midnight on 27 April —Wednesday morning—or be subject to NATO air strikes. The NATO Council also decided that, if there were an attack by heavy weapons against the other safe area zones of Bihac, Srebrenica, Tuzla or Zepa, from any range, or if, in the judgment of NATO and UN military commanders, there were any threatening movement or concentration of heavy weaponry within 20 km of those areas, they would immediately be designated, individually or collectively, as exclusion zones along the lines of that in Gorazde. If any Bosnian Serb heavy weapons were found in designated military exclusion zones around those safe areas after one minute past midnight on 27 April, they and Bosnian Serb military support facilities would be subject to air strikes. It was agreed—this is a crucial point—that any such attacks would be carried out under the agreed co-ordination procedures with UNPROFOR. So it is a dual-key arrangement between the UN and NATO. Either can propose air strikes; both have to agree.

On Saturday 23 April, the Secretary-General's special representative in the former Yugoslavia, Mr. Akashi, reached an agreement with the Bosnian Serb military and civilian authorities, in which a ceasefire was declared around Gorazde with effect from midday on 23 April. It was also agreed that UNPROFOR would deploy a battalion to Gorazde to monitor that ceasefire; that Bosnian Serb heavy weapons would be withdrawn outside a 20 km radius from the centre of Gorazde by midnight on 26 April at the latest; that evacuations would be allowed to proceed; that all UN and humanitarian personnel should have complete freedom of movement; and that negotiations on disengagement should start immediately.

I understand that the Bosnian Serbs are now complying with the terms of that agreement. UNPROFOR deployed a company of Ukrainians, together with a Nordic medical team and 15 military observers, to Gorazde shortly before midnight on 23 April. A further UNPROFOR convoy, comprising a British company from the 1st Duke of Wellington's Regiment and Russian, Egyptian and further Ukrainian elements, arrived in Gorazde yesterday morning.

The evacuation of the wounded is proceeding, supported by British and French helicopters. We have agreed to a request from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to take 50 of the wounded here and we are working closely with UNHCR and the International Organisation for Migration on arrangements.

NATO and UNPROFOR remain in close contact. Sarajevo and most of the rest of Bosnia remain relatively calm.

Air strikes are not an end in themselves. We hope that they will not be necessary. But if, in the judgment of NATO and the UN, they are necessary, no one should doubt that they will be undertaken. The first and urgent objective is a lasting ceasefire, first at Gorazde and then more widely in Bosnia. This should in turn lead to a resumption of the peace process, because a negotiated settlement remains the only way to a lasting peace. It has to include a substantial Bosnian Serb withdrawal from territory that they now occupy.

European Foreign Ministers on 18 April and the North Atlantic Council on 22 April reaffirmed their support for that process, welcoming close co-ordination between the European Union, Russia and the United States, with the aim of bringing our diplomatic initiatives more closely together. I have just discussed this with the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Churkin, and, after my statement, I am meeting Secretary of State Christopher and the French Foreign Minister Mr. Juppé here in London. This will be an important theme of the Anglo-German summit on Wednesday.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Is the Secretary of State aware that there will be a broad welcome for the measures that he has set out in his important statement? I welcome the fact that—at last, as many will say—there seems to be a clear political strategy agreed between the United Nations and NATO, set out in specific terms, which is apparently a determination to give real safety and support to the designated safe areas in United Nations resolutions, which were carried a very long time ago. I believe that that, in particular, will be generally welcomed.

Is the Foreign Secretary confident that the confusion that was apparent this weekend between Mr. Manfred

[Dr. John Cunningham]

Wörner at NATO headquarters, Admiral Smith in Italy and Mr. Akashi in Bosnia will not be repeated? Sadly, there was clearly considerable confusion.

Can the right hon. Gentleman confirm, as I think his statement makes clear, that, although we recognise that air strikes in some circumstances will be regrettably necessary, those strikes will take place only with the agreement of the commanders on the ground in Bosnia and that NATO will not be taking decisions to use air power against the wishes or, literally, over the heads of those responsible for UNPROFOR troops on the ground?

Is the right hon. Gentleman now assured that the discussions that have taken place over the past 72 hours mean that, without any chance of mishap or error, Russia is fully locked into the new United Nations-NATO strategy? Can he assure us that if the Bosnian Serbs do not comply with the deadline of midnight tomorrow, there will be no further hesitation by the United Nations and NATO in taking appropriate action to enforce the decisions that have been made?

In the sad tragedy and calamity of Gorazde, is not the one lesson that we need to learn—one in a long line of lessons to be learned—that if there is indecision, prevarication and confusion by the United Nations and NATO, the people who gain are the Bosnian Serb aggressors while those who lose are not just the Bosnian Muslims, who tragically pay with their lives and many casualties, but the United Nations and NATO because their credibility is further and further undermined?

May I tell the Foreign Secretary—and the Prime Minister—that we wish him well in the discussions later today because we have repeatedly called for that kind of close debate and discussion with our allies to ensure that we can have coherent political objectives in an attempt to resolve this ongoing tragedy in Bosnia?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his general support. I confirm what I said earlier, which the right hon. Gentleman repeated, about the need to bring together the NATO effort and the UN effort. There is an air effort being conducted through NATO. It happens to include RAF aircraft. There is also a ground effort conducted through UNPROFOR which includes a substantial force of British soldiers. It is essential that those two should work together. Normally in a military operation, they are all part of the same force. Consultation between them is carried out privately, they reach a common view and agree on a common form of action. That is the history of modern warfare. In this case, the two are under the auspices of different organisations. However, they must work together. That is what the dual key means and that is what happened over the weekend. Obviously, we cannot have a system in which one form of operation is commanded and implemented without regard for what is happening elsewhere.

I confirm the right hon. Gentleman's point about Russia. We are seeking to unify the diplomatic efforts of all those concerned. The Russian effort in this area is positive and we want to ensure that it is fully harnessed and in tune with our own. The House need have no doubt that there might be hesitations: if, following the expiry of the next deadline at midnight tomorrow, the Bosnian Serbs have not withdrawn from the 20 km zone in accordance with the resolution, there will be no hesitation, using the dual key again in accordance with the situation on the ground, with regard to ordering air strikes if they are necessary for the purpose.

I agree with the right hon. Gentleman about clarity of purpose. He would not wish to obscure the fact that the working together of NATO and the UN has already produced peace, or something approaching peace, around Sarajevo and peace, or something approaching peace, in large areas of central Bosnia where, even a few weeks ago, there was very fierce fighting. The first effort to achieve that in Gorazde did not succeed and the fighting continued. At the end of the day, fighting continues until those who are fighting are persuaded or forced to do otherwise. In the right hon. Gentleman's natural concern, which we all share in respect of Gorazde, let him not obscure what has been achieved hitherto.

Sir Cranley Onslow (Woking): The House will welcome my right hon. Friend's statement and draw some encouragement from it. However, is the UN aware of the identity of the Bosnian Serb commanders who were responsible for attacks on innocent civilians in that designated safe area, particularly on targets such as the hospital in Gorazde? Is there any chance that those men will ultimately be brought to trial for the murders that they have committed?

Mr. Hurd: I share my right hon. Friend's feelings about that. Of course, part of the effort must be to identify individual commanders and others who are responsible and who should be brought to trial for those atrocities within the terms of the resolutions that the UN Security Council has already passed.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Has not the unsatisfactory nature of the dual key system been demonstrated over the past 48 hours when General Rose apparently asked for air strikes, but was denied them? Once the decision in principle is taken, should not the decision in practice rest exclusively with the commander on the ground? When the right hon. Gentleman sees the United States Secretary of State this afternoon, will he convey to him the anxiety that many people feel about the apparently contradictory statements coming out of the US Administration over Bosnia, and remind him that the success of Sarajevo and the Croat-Muslim peace, to which the right hon. Gentleman referred, is attributable to the military and diplomatic leadership of the United States?

Mr. Hurd: I would advise the hon. and learned Gentleman not to take seriously every anecdote that he reads about who asked for what and when. He will agree that the dual key is essential. We cannot have a situation in which those who are responsible on the ground find that those who are responsible in the air are doing something without regard to their own information or their own interests, or vice-versa. *[Interruption.]* The hon. and learned Gentleman has got it wrong. As I said, I would not pay too much credence to such anecdotes.

The fact is that the dual key is essential. It means that there must be constant consultation between Commander-in-Chief South, Admiral Smith, and the UN, which is Mr. Akashi, General de la Presle and General Rose. That is happening.

The hon. and learned Gentleman is perfectly right about the crucial role of the United States. Like him, I give it credit for the big advance that was achieved between the

Muslims and the Croats. I am sure that the conversations that I shall have, and the Prime Minister will have, with Warren Christopher this afternoon will carry that forward.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Does my right hon. Friend accept that if the international community had continued to speak with a single voice after Sarajevo, the tragedy of Gorazde would probably have been avoided? Will he now promise the House that there will be no more talk of even handedness between the victim and the aggressor and that, the aggressor having been clearly identified and an ultimatum given, threats will be carried out? Will he further confirm that we are dealing not with warring factions but with a recognised sovereign state and a Government who are multi-ethnic and whom we should support against the aggression from Serbia and the Serbs within Bosnia?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend's definition of the role of the UN is not that on which our soldiers are engaged, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has frequently made clear. The aim of the Security Council resolutions and the North Atlantic Council decision, which I have reported to the House, is very specific. The Bosnian Serbs should be in no doubt about our willingness to use both sets of decisions for the purposes named. We will not be involved in fighting on one side of the conflict or the other, and that has been made clear time and again. We have specific objectives which we believe are necessary and justified for the international community.

The conflict will not be brought to an end by military intervention from outside. Military intervention on the ground can help the humanitarian effort and it can help to protect safe areas, as can air intervention. That has been proved and agreed. However, all those concerned, whether they are Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats, or adherents to the Bosnian Government, need to understand—I am sure that they do understand—that, at the end of the day, this horror can be brought to an end only by a negotiated settlement, which is why the new set of diplomatic initiatives is under way.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): While any reduction in the killing and suffering must be welcomed, is the Foreign Secretary aware that, in Washington, as I discovered last week, there is much support for the view expressed by Lord Healey that the United Nations is in breach of its charter when it interferes in the internal affairs of any member state? Is it not understandable, then, that there should be some confusion about the role of NATO, and should not these matters be examined in detail?

Mr. Hurd: I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on the success of his visit to the United States. I am not sure that this subject was at the top of his agenda, but I gather that his visit went well and I am glad of that. The Security Council and, indeed, the whole of the United Nations have wrestled for years with the problem of what to do when an unacceptable situation arises essentially within a member state.

In this case, there is fighting between three communities in a member state, which undoubtedly originated there and has been egged on, in particular from Belgrade. The Security Council has resolved that dilemma in a way that takes the shape of many of its resolutions, and that is right.

I do not think that we can leave the matter alone and say that it is essentially within a member state and we should not have anything to do with it, because there has been outside interference. Nor, however, can we suppose that the UN by itself will be able to impose peace with justice, as opposed to helping those concerned towards a negotiated peace.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): Will my right hon. Friend accept that the twin policies of the provision of humanitarian aid and the protection of safe areas are incompatible, and that that has lain at the root of the problems in recent days? Will he explain how the new dual key arrangements which he has announced will overcome that incompatibility?

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that they are incompatible. If my hon. Friend went to Vitez, Maglaj, Mostar or Sarajevo, he would see how they are working together. The airlift to Sarajevo has been resumed and supplies are getting in, and that is as a result of Sarajevo being effectively a safe area. That, in turn, is a result of the efforts of NATO and the UN.

The two objectives that my hon. Friend mentions are working together throughout large parts of Bosnia. They have not worked together in Gorazde, and it is important that they should work together where they can. That is why the decisions that I have reported to the House were taken.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does the Foreign Secretary agree that one of the frustrations that exists in the west, this House and Britain generally about concluding the war is that people tend to believe that the quick effort in the Gulf can be repeated almost everywhere? Does he also agree that the situation in Yugoslavia should be compared with Vietnam, rather than the Gulf, in terms of trying to get a clean, quick finish?

Does the right hon. Gentleman also agree that if we sent a proportionate amount of British troops to the other 27 civil wars throughout the world as have gone to Bosnia and elsewhere, everybody up to the age of 40—probably including Portillo and all the rest of them—would have to be wearing uniforms? Would not the royal family—who are commanders-in-chief of this, that and the other regiment—have to do a bit of fighting as well? Is not this problem ten times more difficult than that experienced in the Gulf?

Mr. Hurd: I thought that the hon. Gentleman started excellently, but he spoiled it totally by the end. His first point is right. Comparisons made between situations are almost always wrong. The worst tragedy in the world in terms of the quantity of suffering is the one on which I answered a question about a quarter of an hour ago—Rwanda.

We do not have a new world order. We have a traditional set of world disorders and we are trying, case by case and institution by institution, to equip ourselves to deal more adequately with those disorders. Each one is different, and the effort that the outside world can make to help solve each one will differ also.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): My right hon. Friend's statement clarified certain issues that had not appeared to interlink properly in the past few days. Is he satisfied that the Serbs in Bosnia understand the meaning of deterrence, which is that we will strike if we say we will? We should not fall into a difference of opinion between two separate

[Mr. Ian Taylor]

organisations. Is not that absolutely critical if NATO is to carry out the UN instructions and prevent Serbian aggression against the safe areas?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Bosnian Serbs do understand that. If they did not, they would not have acted around Sarajevo as they did some weeks ago, or as they have acted around Gorazde in the past few hours. I do not say that their understanding is complete, and we must ram it home on all occasions. That is what I am trying to do today. Certainly, their actions begin to show that they have some understanding of that reality.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): As one who has been critical in the past of the Government's stance, may I thank the Foreign Secretary for his statement today. Does he accept that in the 1930s, when the Jews in Germany and Poland and surrounding territories were being exterminated, most people in Europe could claim that they knew nothing of what was going on, but that no one has that defence today? Therefore, is not his statement about dual key control and how it will work of crucial importance? In the past 24 hours, has General Rose asked for air power?

Mr. Hurd: I suggest to the hon. Gentleman that he should not listen to all the anecdotes in the newspapers. In the past 24 hours, according to my understanding, General Rose has not on any occasion asked for air strikes and been denied them. The position is that there has been discussion on several occasions between the Commander-in-Chief South, Admiral Smith, and General de la Presle, Mr. Akashi and General Rose through the various channels.

There is no doubt about two things. First, up to now it has been the view through the dual key procedure that air strikes would not have helped the process on the ground, which was developing in a helpful way, as I have described to the House.

The hon. Gentleman said that people were dying. Indeed, that is true, but does he think that the medevac —the evacuation from the hospital that he saw on television last night—would have occurred if there had been air strikes? Those are the balances that one has to strike in real life. That is the responsibility that we have put on the NATO and UN commanders. My point has been that they have to exercise those responsibilities together. That is what they are doing.

Secondly, it is clear from what Mr. Akashi says and Secretary-General Wörner says that there should be no doubt in the minds of the Serbs that if they do not comply with the second part of the NATO decision, as they are complying with the first part, they will be at risk of the air strikes which are authorised by that decision.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): My right hon. Friend said earlier that a durable peace in war-torn Bosnia would come about only as a result of a negotiated settlement, presumably directly between the parties. Is he optimistic or pessimistic about the pressure that could be exerted by effective economic sanctions? I seem to remember that sanctions are in force. I wonder whether they are proving effective in bringing, particularly, the Bosnian Serbs to the negotiating table.

Mr. Hurd: I believe, and the information that we have suggests, that sanctions have achieved a considerable change in the attitude of President Milosevic and the Government in Belgrade. What is in doubt is the chain of influence from Belgrade, through Pale and Mr. Karadzic, to General Mladic and the Bosnian Serb commanders. From time to time, that influence is exerted. From time to time, it does not seem to exist. There is no doubt that sanctions are an effective pressure on Serbia-Montenegro and we and our allies intend fully to maintain them until we see clearly that the resolutions of the Security Council are being applied.

Mr. Mike Gapes (Ilford, South): Will the Foreign Secretary state clearly what views the British Government have expressed to the United States in the past few days? Is not it about time that we told President Clinton that we would take his advice more seriously if he were prepared actively to argue for American troops on the ground who could be subject to the bombing by American aircraft that his military commanders advocate? Is not it about time that we told those carping and whining voices in the American Congress that some of us in Europe are getting fed up with getting advice and condemnation when they are not prepared to put their people's lives at risk?

Mr. Hurd: I have certainly heard sound bites, which may not have been typical, from American Senators and Congressmen, that seemed to leave out of account entirely the fact that some of their European allies, including Britain and France, have substantial commitments on the ground and troops who are doing a good job. President Clinton and Secretary of State Christopher understand the position well and have expressed it well. In the past few days, we worked out with the United States professionally, through the work of the officials whom I have mentioned, details that helped to lead to the NATO Council resolution. Others were at work, too. On the diplomatic side, we now have to work with them, the Russians and fellow Europeans to unify the peace process and the diplomatic efforts that we are now making.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): Will my right hon. Friend remain extremely cautious about getting UNPROFOR and its large British contingent further embroiled in this treacherous and perilous Bosnian bog? Does he recognise the military reality that safe areas can be protected from a determined assault only by dug-in infantrymen supported by tanks and artillery, which is well beyond the capacity of UNPROFOR? Finally, will he have another look at what happened to the multinational force that was dispatched to Beirut in the 1980s because it was felt that there was a need to do something? Does he remember that it was finally withdrawn after 200 US marines needlessly lost their lives?

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and I are, and have been throughout, very cautious on the subject of British military involvement in Bosnia. We know well the risks of being drawn step by step into a war to which, with respect to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), we are not a party and in which the usefulness of military action from outside is limited. We have defined at each stage what we think can usefully be done and have helped to organise a United Nations force and a British contribution to it accordingly. The last step, which I just reported to the House, was worked out in substantial detail

by the military authorities in NATO, drawing on the experiences and views of UNPROFOR and of member states. That much I can say.

Parallels—whether with Vietnam, Beirut or other areas—can shed some light, but the differences are greater than the similarities. We are well aware of the risks. I do not believe in all or nothing or that if one cannot do everything, one should do nothing. What we have done diplomatically and militarily in Bosnia fits the needs of the situation and what, in practice, forces from outside countries and institutions can do to help.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the Foreign Secretary confirm that between 700 and 2,000 people have lost their lives within 700 miles of London since he came to the Dispatch Box to answer questions on the matter only a few days ago? Many lives have been lost. Will he also confirm that several thousand people have been injured since he last answered questions at the Dispatch Box? Is he really convinced that, in the past seven days, the Government have done everything possible to avoid the terror in that city in Yugoslavia?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, I believe that—within the time that the hon. Gentleman mentioned—we have. If he seriously supposes that summoning massive air strikes on the Serbs around Gorazde would have averted the killing, he is mistaken.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: You have done nothing. Clinton pushed you.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is mistaken, as he has been in many interventions. We have worked together on something that has never happened before in history—the United Nations and NATO working together to extend international activity in Bosnia. The hon. Gentleman is leaving out of the account what has been achieved in Bosnia and the lives that would have been lost if we had not taken those earlier decisions on Sarajevo, in central Bosnia. For heaven's sake, let us recognise what has been achieved and act energetically to improve and build on it. The hon. Gentleman's line of questioning does no one any good.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): May I welcome the Foreign Secretary's announcement that all six secure zones in Bosnia will be defended by air? Can he estimate what additional troops will be required in each secure zone to ensure that they are safe and that they are not used as a base for military activity against those attacking the towns?

Mr. Hurd: I cannot give figures for each safe area. That is not my responsibility, but my hon. Friend knows of the efforts that we have made—greater efforts, I think, than those of any other country—to increase the resources available to UNPROFOR. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence gave some figures last week. I can update them.

As a result of our efforts, the UN has received firm offers from member states of about 7,700 additional troops. It has asked those states to proceed with the deployment of about 5,700 of those troops. The deployment of further troops, on top of the ceiling of 5,800 authorised by the UN, will depend on a further resolution and that, in turn, depends on financial resources—on everyone making available what is needed to finance those troops.

I see a continuing need for increased UNPROFOR forces in the safe areas and in implementing ceasefires, such as the one now obtaining in central Bosnia. That means not just more men—we have been very active not just in providing more men but in getting others to do so—but the finances to keep them going.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey): Can the Foreign Secretary enlighten me a bit more about the working of the dual key system? Can he confirm to the House that in the run-up to the recent threats and ultimatums, at no stage did General Rose ask for air strikes and be refused them?

Mr. Hurd: I answered an earlier question and I am not going into the details—I do not know all of them—of transactions between the UN commanders and NATO. Those transactions occur every day; suggestions are made, discussed and resolved. What I do know is the procedure, which is essential.

Mr. Frank Field: What is the answer?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Lady asked for elucidation about the dual key and I am giving it to her. It means that where one has an air effort and a ground effort, they should be in harmony. Where it is suggested by the UN that there might be an air strike, it is for NATO to agree that it should take place and agree on the targeting. Where NATO believes that an air strike might be justified, for example, because it has seen some results of aerial reconnaissance, it is essential that the UN, which has the information on the ground, should also agree. That seems to be entire common sense. It is the system which has operated in Sarajevo and it is the system which is now operating in Gorazde, because it was confirmed by the NATO Council last week.

Mr. Winston Churchill (Davyhulme): I welcome the UN's new-found resolve in respect of Bosnia and I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the personal part that he has played in recent days to help to bring that about. Given the ragged track record of the UN thus far in terms of threats made and threats actually delivered, and the number of times that the UN's bluff has been so blatantly called, can my right hon. Friend give the House the assurance that he and the Government will do all in their power, given the new-found international resolve, to ensure that the UN's bluff is no longer called?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his general remarks, but no bluff was called in Sarajevo. The Bosnian Serbs realised that and acted accordingly. In Gorazde, there was no bluff, because close air support was provided last week, but it did not produce the result expected. That is why NATO has taken the decisions that my hon. Friend supports. I am glad to assure him and, indeed, the Bosnian Serbs and anyone else who may be listening that there is no question of unwillingness by the members of NATO to carry out air strikes on the lines of, and under, the procedures that the NATO Council established last week.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Can the Foreign Secretary tell us why the British Government seem so terrified of holding a debate in Government time on Bosnia? Could it be that statements are a convenient way of throwing crumbs of information to the House, and

[Mr. Max Madden]

enable the Foreign Secretary to refuse to answer whether General Rose has been refused requests for bombing over the past 48 hours, as opposed to the past 24 hours? Their use also denies critics of Government policy a proper opportunity to explain their case.

Mr. Hurd: I should be delighted to have a debate, because that would be a much less difficult exercise for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and myself than the repeated statements with which we seek to keep the House informed. It is a matter for the usual channels, not for me, but the idea that either my right hon. and learned Friend or I are shrinking from a debate is very far from the truth.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): In spite of the potential frustrations involved and in spite of the inherent difficulty in evolving appropriate rules of engagement, can my right hon. Friend confirm that there is no alternative to a dual key authority for the effective use of air power in the theatre? Can he say what measures are available to the UN and NATO as the instrument of deterrence for the UN in what was Yugoslavia, to prevent the Serbs from extending their influence by offensive operations outside the six safe areas?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful that my hon. Friend, with his experience of those operational matters, supports the dual key as essential. He is entirely right about that.

We are not saying—the international community would be very unwise to say—that we are able to deter all Serb or, indeed, Croat or Muslim offensive activity outside the safe areas. We are not purporting to do that and that is one reason why a return to the negotiating table and, ultimately, a successful negotiation is the only way of ending all those dangers.

Dr. John Cunningham: The right hon. Gentleman's statement refers to United Nations Security Council resolution 913, which re-affirms the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina. What will be the response of the United Nations and NATO if the Serbs attempt not to bombard another safe area, but to annex further territory along the River Sava, for example? It is not a safe area, but it is part of an independent state. What will NATO and the UN do?

Mr. Hurd: Of course it is part of an independent state and the Bosnian Serbs are a community in that state. That is the nature of the conflict. That is why, as the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) said, comparisons with the Gulf and other such dramas are inexact. This is a civil war, to a large extent inspired and egged on from outside.

The Muslims have been gaining ground in some parts of Bosnia, the Serbs in other parts and there is a fragile truce between the Croats and the Muslims. All those facts might change. The UN Security Council set out certain areas and has tried to protect them ever since. That is a limited objective. It would be unwise to pretend, as I have just said, that that protection extends everywhere. It does not.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. We must now move on.

Education and Upbringing

4.12 pm

Sir Michael Neubert (Romford): I beg to move,

That this House, recognising one generation's responsibility for the next and the critical importance of young people's development to a stable, healthy and well-ordered society, calls on the Government to continue to encourage a wide diversity of choice in schooling, greater priority for the needs of children within the family and resistance to harmful influences to which they are exposed in the media and elsewhere.

When it comes to private Members' motions and the chance to initiate a Commons debate, fortune has smiled on me, not once, not twice, but no fewer than five times during my time in the House, and has half-smiled on me on two further occasions, when I came third. In all that time, however, not once has my name come out in the top 20 in the ballot for private Members' Bills, so lady luck has so far denied me the opportunity of making a permanent mark on Parliament by seeing some minor measure on to the statute book and generations of lawyers to come will be spared the need to remember my name. Although, in that sense, second best, private Members' debates are a valuable means of mentioning issues of importance that are too often crowded out by the legislative programme.

My motion sets out to provide a fretwork for discussion to which others can contribute and fill in the gaps.

My contribution will take several themes. Some are hobby horses, but I hope that I shall not appear to gallop off in all directions. The disparate issues have a common thread—a concern for the moral and social integrity of our people and the welfare of our children. That concern is touched by three aspects of education, two of which arise in my constituency of Romford: a deeper, long-standing apprehension about the future of the family and the subversion of our traditional way of life; and the menace of violent videos and other vicious influences in the media and elsewhere.

First, on education, the Government deserve credit for the courage of their reforms of the state education system—and not before time. Too many children have left the system with not a university degree but a degree of illiteracy and innumeracy that has handicapped them for life. The vested interests have fought like tigers for their cubs but, by responding to genuine grievance while pursuing the principle, the Government are achieving continuing progress and improvement. Especially welcome is the widening variety of provision. Education needs to conform not to some universal nostrum but to the abilities and aptitudes of individual children.

Choice has rightly become the watchword for parents. All the evidence shows growing interest in the exercise of choice. The increasing amount of published information is a necessary corollary to parental choice at all stages. One option for parents which I strongly support is single-sex education. There are two single-sex schools in the London borough of Havering: the Royal Liberty school for boys and the Frances Bardsley school for Girls. Both are in my constituency and regularly oversubscribed. Some of their popularity is undoubtedly due to their reputation for plain and simple schooling, but single-sex education is an important—if not all-important—consideration in some parents' choice. In recent years, a number have been disappointed and, because the schools are both in Romford, those who are my constituents have felt particularly aggrieved.

Moreover, in some cases parents who have given a single-sex school as their first preference have seen, through the system of selection, their children denied places and the places taken by children whose parents' first choice was a mixed school. The council has agreed to extend the allocation for single-sex preference by a small degree, but that element remains under-provided.

That represents a powerful argument in favour of the outstanding application for Frances Bardsley to retain its sixth form. When post-16 education in the borough was reorganised some years ago and plans were agreed for a sixth-form college, Frances Bardsley, along with other schools under full local authority control, was required to relinquish its sixth-form, but managed to negotiate a temporary reprieve. Now that the sixth-form college is full to overflowing, as a result—again, credit is due to the Government—of the surge of children staying on after 16, which is long overdue in our part of London, Frances Bardsley is, very reasonably, asking for its sixth form to be made permanent. That will be to the great benefit of the girls in the school. The juniors will have more mature girls at the head of the school and the sixth-formers will be free and undistracted by male adolescents to work towards the outstanding and exceptional results obtained by many single-sex schools last summer.

The Establishment is opposed to that, clinging to its grand plan, despite the change of circumstances, and fully prepared to spend more public money by providing extra accommodation when the existing facilities are already available and in use at Frances Bardsley. The parents, however, fully support the governors and staff in their bid, and backed them by voting for grant-maintained status, which they achieved a year ago. It would be a serious rebuff to them if they were denied their sixth form now, and a blow to the principle of single-sex education at sixth form level—an experience from which I benefited but not, I hasten to add, at a girls' school. At an earlier age in the course of my chequered education, however, I attended two girls' schools—*[Interruption.]*—as a pupil.

Given the Secretary of State's acknowledgement of the merits of traditional school sixth forms earlier this year, I have high hopes of a favourable decision in that case.

One of the three subjects that I took at A-level was English literature, which is indisputably one of the greatest literatures in the world and a priceless heritage for us all. No wonder parents complained about a text used for English studies at GCSE level at another school in my constituency, St. Edward's—a so-called poem entitled "Stobhill". Not only was the sole resemblance to poetry in the varying lengths of the printed lines; the subject matter was gang rape and the incineration of an aborted foetus. This, apparently, is our young teenagers' inheritance today.

When taxed with the matter, the headmaster was unrepentant in his defence. The chairman of governors, deputy headmaster in a neighbouring London borough, supported him to the hilt. The parents who complained proved to be a small minority. The Archbishop of Canterbury—and this, believe it or not, is a Church of England school—having referred to a mother's "very understandable worries", did not wish to interfere, believing that how something is taught makes a crucial difference over and above its objective content. Only the Minister of State, my right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Blatch, was prepared to describe the choice of text as "most regrettable". Amen to that.

That experience brought me up with a jolt: it made me realise just how far things had gone. Another text used is a poem about a boy's killing of his cat by shutting it in the door. It includes the words:

> "The black fur squealed and he felt his skin
> Prickle with sparks of dry delight."

The boy killers of James Bulger probably felt the same sensation.

What chance do today's young people have when even school allows them no refuge from such squalor? What kind of society can it be in which parents, teachers, school governors and an archbishop can persuade themselves that gang rape is a suitable and entirely appropriate subject for school children to study—and in the name of English literature?

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): At a Church of England school.

Sir Michael Neubert: Yes, at a Church of England school.

That is why I welcomed the news, in March, that the reading list of mainly classic authors would be retained in the revised national curriculum, despite the opposition of leading English teachers. The council of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority agreed unanimously to overturn the recommendation of its own advisers that teachers should be free to choose the writers and works that pupils study.

I admire the council's pluck—one up for political incorrectness. It must have had its work cut out. Unfortunately, teachers can no longer be trusted to exercise discretion, because too many of them have been tutored in the progressive thinking that has prevailed since the permissive 1960s. The headmaster's defence was that, according to the latest figures, there were 69 teenage pregnancies per 1,000, and the abortion rate for girls aged 11 to 16 in 1991 was 2.2 per 1,000—2.8 in our area. What does he expect? If young people are saturated with sex, they will think of little else. An English lesson is a chance to show them that there are other things in life.

Nor should we overlook the element of political motivation in what has been happening in our schools. Nowadays, it is out in the open. Terry Eagleton, Warton professor of English literature at Oxford university—who has described himself as a "shamelessly unreconstructed Marxist", and who persuaded more than 500 academics, including 20 other university professors, to support a letter that he wrote to *The Times Higher Education Supplement*—believes that language is fascist, grammar an instrument of oppression wielded by the bourgeoisie against the working class and the horror film "Nightmare on Elm Street" every bit as worthy of study as "A Midsummer Night's Dream". He also believes that correcting children's speech is seriously harmful to their self-esteem.

Consciously or unconsciously, many teachers are helping to bring about the triumph of the left in education by absorbing such ideas and putting them into practice in the classroom. Part of "Stobhill" is in raw Scots dialect. There may be a case for advanced students to study such texts, but when the general level of literacy is causing so much concern, secondary school children studying modern authors would be better served by works written in standard English.

Children are the casualties of this ideological warfare. It is they who are being sent out into an increasingly

[Sir Michael Neubert]

competitive world—into a hostile environment where more than 20 million people are unemployed in Europe, 35 per cent. of whom have never had a job.

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): Does my hon. Friend agree that children whose spelling, grammar and knowledge are not corrected at school are strongly disadvantaged as adults? Is he aware of a document on the subject of crime that is being circulated in my constituency this week? I have a copy with me. The spelling of the word "neighbourhood", as in "neighbourhood watch", begins "neib" in one instance and "neirb" in another; the word "scheme" is spelt "sceme", and the spelling of "prevention", as in "crime prevention", begins "pro". Does my hon. Friend agree that the Liberal Democrat councillors who circulated the document would have benefited from testing in schools?

Sir Michael Neubert: My hon. Friend's comments will come as no surprise to the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster), who is representing the Liberals today and who is familiar with the document. I was not aware how closely illiteracy and Liberalism in the south-west were connected. The constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) would do better to elect better trained and Conservative candidates in the council elections next week.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): While we are on the subject of spelling mistakes and grammar, may I point out that on one infamous occasion the Secretary of State for Wales issued a statement containing four spelling mistakes and at least three grammatical errors? When it was marked by an English teacher, the right hon. Gentleman was given the thumbs down in terms of GCSE grading.

Sir Michael Neubert: That does not surprise me either. I have had the good fortune of serving as a Minister in Her Majesty's Government. During that time I, too, was disappointed and disillusioned by the standard of spelling among the civil servants who prepared briefs and press statements for me. I will not blame my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales without further inquiry: it may be that he has delegated too far and unwisely.

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): I entirely agree with the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) that the spelling was incorrect and that it was a great pity. I hope that the hon. Gentleman would be prepared to investigate the spelling of the word "grammar" as in grammar school. I could tell him an interesting story involving the use of that word. He will recall that his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has used the following three phrases in recent months:

"Myself and Emily Blatch have been all around the country".

"me and my inspectors have been to hundreds of schools".

and

"just the kind of thing that me as a parent".

Sir Michael Neubert: I would do better to await the more lengthy speech of the hon. Gentleman than to listen to examples of misspellings. I am sure that we could all produce our favourite examples and argue them for rather longer than we have available this afternoon, although I should be the last person to diminish the importance of spelling: I have always believed it to be an important grounding for life, and I still do so.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): With regard to presentation and communication, if people do not care how they spell or how they present their ideas, are they likely to care about the policies that they wish to present? All hon. Members know that Liberal Democrats say one thing here and another in their constituencies, one thing in the council chamber and another at the council ward, one thing in one village and another thing in another village, and one thing in one street and a different thing in the next street.

Sir Michael Neubert: All Conservative Members have experience of that.

To return to the subject of children, who are so often casualties of ideological warfare, if they are not to join the 20 million unemployed in Europe they must not leave school unable to express themselves competently in their own language, unable to make simple calculations in their heads and with their sensibilities brutalised by squalor. I call on the Secretary of State, when he makes his decision on the curriculum later this year to range himself with the traditionalists and me—I think I use the word "me" correctly there—and my noble Friend Lady Blatch in agreeing that the sort of material that I have described is wholly inappropriate and that the study of English, to quote Lady Blatch,

"is best advanced through an emphasis on the tried and tested works of real distinction".

On the wider question of the level of attainment achieved by our school leavers, I again commend the Government for their dogged pursuit of the principle of testing. It has long been clear to me that teachers object to testing often because tests are a test of them as well as of their pupils. However, it is imperative that there is a system of interim tests to check on progress, because leaving it to the final year examinations is too late—by then, any damage done can rarely be remedied in later life.

There are few second chances in education, which is why I regret the continuing opposition of the National Union of Teachers to testing. To judge from its much televised conference over the Easter weekend, it seems to have been hijacked by the hard left. Its position is neither honourable nor responsible. The Government have gone to considerable lengths to meet genuine grievances in introducing the system. The time has now come for all those involved to unite in making the system a success for the sake of children. Lest it be thought that my comments are unduly critical of teachers, I should mention that at the start of my career I did some teaching and am a certificated teacher. That experience left me with the highest regard for the dedication and vocation of the vast majority of teachers, but the welfare of the next generation is too important for me not to say what I think now.

The greatest threat to the welfare of children is the breakdown of the traditional family on which the structure of our society is founded. Let us consider some facts taken from an information sheet prepared by the Maranatha community as evidence of what it calls the "gathering storm clouds". The number of divorces has doubled since 1971; the United Kingdom has the second highest divorce rate in Europe, Denmark having the highest which, similarly, has the highest number of women in work, the United Kingdom coming second; marriage breakdown is now six times higher than in 1961; there was a 400 per cent. increase in births outside marriage between 1971 and 1991; eight in 10 births to women under the age of 20 are outside marriage, or are what used to be called illegitimate;

2 million children are being raised in single-parent families; one in five children conceived in the United Kingdom is aborted and 3.5 million abortions were carried out in England and Wales between 1968 and 1991. If children had a choice, how many would choose to be born into a world such as this?

The consequences of those figures are too numerous to detail, but we are all well aware of them. Every day, the newspapers bring news of some new enormity: increasing violence, spiralling social security expenditure, rising crime and drug addiction and widespread alcoholism which all mean a greater burden on the health service. Children are frequently the victims of such problems.

We have allowed our traditional way of life to be subverted and we are paying a terrible price for it. We must reassert our support for the family and devise and direct our policies to that end. We cannot afford to do otherwise—the creaking platform of public expenditure is on the point of collapse. Parts of our cities are not only nuclear-free zones but are rapidly becoming nuclear family-free zones.

Support for lone parents had risen to £5 billion a year before the Government took the decisive step to set up the Child Support Agency. Parents must be made to accept responsibility for their children and for their own future. Those who separate or who refuse to commit themselves to marriage should not look to the rest of us for support in their later years. Independence and irresponsibility now may be at the expense of loneliness and deprivation in years to come. Partnerships and relationships may prove to be the ultimate 20th century tragedy.

Among some of the worst influences to which young people are exposed are the violent images on video and television and in the cinema. The growth of violence is unquestionably one of the most alarming developments of recent years because it is so often pointless, unpredictable and inexplicable. There can be no ultimate protection for any of us against it but, for years, trendy opinion held that there was no connection between violent images and violent action. Now, at last, the academics have finally realised what common sense led the rest of us to conclude from the start—there is a connection.

The House did itself some credit two weeks ago by insisting on tougher curbs on video nasties. A few days later, a survey by the Professional Association of Teachers confirmed the widespread circulation of violent and pornographic videos among children of even primary school age. The horrific film "Silence of the Lambs" was one eight-year-old girl's favourite Christmas holiday film. One wonders who and where her parents are; one would be interested to meet them.

The potency of visual images on the television screen threatens to mar the life of every young child. A photograph published in *The Sunday Telegraph* after our debate illustrated that point with stark clarity. It depicted a baby in its high chair which had been placed within two feet of a 24-inch television set, head-on to the screen. He was looking at the screen in bemusement while the mother sat smoking a cigarette and watching him. In that way, we create a nation of zombies. The phenomenal power of television is barely constrained and rarely accountable. If parents use television and video as previous generations used the dummy, selfishly shrugging off their own responsibilities for looking after their children, we are lost.

"Only connect", said the communications guru Marshall McLuhan in the 1960s. "Only corrupt" might be the motto now. It is no surprise, given its all-pervasive, all-powerful influence, that television is the favoured medium for those who seek to undermine our traditional way of life. Channel 4 is currently doing its best. Its gay Christmas has been followed by a lesbian spring. To give the flavour of what was on offer at Christmas, apart from a queen's speech by Quentin Crisp, there was an episode, caught by one of my constituents switching channels, which showed a man drinking his mistress's urine. Whether it was out of a tumbler or straight from the woman's orifice, I have not yet summoned up the strength to ask. Either way, it does not seem likely to have been a high point in western civilisation. Other programmes promised visits to strip joints and public urinals. In "The Greatest Pxxxxxx Show on Earth", a comic argued for more bad language on television.

When challenged, Channel 4's defence is that it is required by its remit to offer programmes that are an alternative to those on the other channels. To that, I say that necrophilia may have its adherents, but that does not seem a reason for it to be shown on the screen in a living room. A second defence, echoed by the Independent Television Commission, is that such programmes represent only a small proportion of the hours transmitted. The question is whether such material should be transmitted at all. The argument is on a par with the *Punch* cartoon in which the unmarried housemaid confesses to an illegitimate baby, but says that it is only a very small one.

Let us be clear that programming of that character, which flouts all standards of decency, taste and discretion, does not come about by chance. Programme-makers are constantly seeking to extend the limits of what they can get away with. The examples that I have given are a deliberate and direct assault on three of our major institutions: the monarchy, the Christian Church and the family. We cannot allow the subversives to win. That means, among other things, that we cannot be all things to all men and all women, and all things in between.

There is no doubt that political motivation is one mainspring. Conservatives should wake up. After being rejected at the ballot box by the British people in four successive general elections, the left has been left to penetrate our defences from underground. Anything that undermines our traditional way of life is likely to sap our political strength at the same time. We should, therefore, especially beware egalitarianism masquerading as equality and the fallacy—perhaps spelt with a "ph"—that women are the same as men.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way as I missed the first few minutes of his speech. He and I taught at the same institution, although at different times. He will know that in that institution, a great deal was done through school assembly and religious instruction to inculcate values by which children could live in later life. Does my hon. Friend share my concern about the report late last week that the National Association of Head Teachers seemed to question what could be achieved through school assemblies?

Sir Michael Neubert: Yes, I share that concern. One of the reassurances today is that, if he is successful in catching your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) may touch on this subject in his own speech.

I was talking about the role that women have to play in the world; I defy the fallacy that women are the same as

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men. In the uniquely precious responsibility of creating and nurturing children, men and women have different but indispensable roles. Children need two responsible parents, preferably their own.

The motion calls for

"a stable, healthy and well-ordered society".

To achieve that, we shall need to give greater emphasis to discipline, respect for authority, consideration of others and, above all, the integrity of family life. There is a phrase for it: "Forward to fundamentals".

4.39 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I congratulate the hon. Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) on managing, at last, to obtain such a high-profile position for a private Member's motion and on the serious and important subject that he has chosen to introduce. Probably, I would heartily concur with more than three quarters of what he said, and I hope that I shall be able to explain where I felt that he was not hitting the target.

There can be no doubt that in Britain we need to improve the quality of the education given to our children and to consider seriously the society in which we live and the way in which it is developing. However, a part of what the hon. Gentleman said placed a great deal of the onus in achieving all those aims on schools and on teachers. He began to admit, in commenting on the influence of television and mass media, that there were other issues to consider. We need to make it clear that there have been developments in society in the past 10 or 20 years for which teachers and schools cannot bear responsibility, and which are of far more fundamental importance.

Of course, what we did not hear in the hon. Gentleman's speech was the fact that, for more than half the period in question and certainly over the past 15 years, his own Government have been in power. Some of the things that they have done, and the atmosphere and the ambience created in our society by them, have contributed significantly to the problems that he described and the fears that he raised.

For example, if we consider the legacy of the past 15 years in education, we find in our schools that the lack of discipline and the instances of the exclusion of pupils for behavioural problems are growing. Probably, those occurrences are vastly under-reported, yet the figures are still growing tremendously. It is only in the past 12 months that the Government have begun to consider seriously ways in which those problems may be tackled.

It is not the first occasion on which the Government have considered those problems. The substantial Elton report, which was published about four years ago, included 138 recommendations on how schools, local authorities, other agencies and central Government could contribute towards making schools places where children could learn in an ordered atmosphere. However, it has taken some four years or more from the publication of that report for the Government to take the problem seriously. The motion addresses a problem which has been experienced especially in the past decade.

We have seen the drive towards the local management of schools; I entirely agree with the Government on the need to give schools greater independence and control over finances. Labour local authorities were pioneering the idea long before the great education reform Bill was introduced. *[Interruption.]* I heard a sedentary intervention of "Rubbish", but I assure the hon. Member who made it that he plainly does not know what happened in many local authorities around the country. There were Labour authorities that pioneered the local management of schools. There may have been other schools, as the hon. Member for Louth—

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): Brigg and Cleethorpes.

Mr. Win Griffiths: I am sorry. It was the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown). I cannot keep pace with the rate of change in England. There were those who opposed the local management of schools, but, let us be clear, it was pioneered by Labour authorities.

Due to the way in which the entire financing of education has changed in the past few years, there have been tremendous pressures in schools—arising principally out of the way in which the average salary has been used in the formula rather than the real salary—on the number of teachers employed. For the first time, pupil-teacher ratios in primary schools, especially, are beginning to rise. However, classes are getting bigger and I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will appreciate that that is a legacy of some of the ill-considered changes that have been made by the Government, which, so often, were right in principle, but wrong in application.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Does the hon. Gentleman welcome the fact that expenditure per pupil since 1979 has been increased by 47 per cent. in real terms? That has surely added to the ability of schools to educate children and to give them the three essentials of skills, discipline and enthusiasm for education. As he says that the Opposition take the matter so seriously, will he explain why the Government Benches are well populated at the moment, yet the Opposition Benches are completely bare, as they have been throughout the debate so far?

Mr. Griffiths: May I take the more serious point made by the hon. Gentleman about the issue of funding? The funding of education in the post-war period has increased tremendously, but a large part of that increase has been to meet the greater demands of the education system, such as the use of computers in schools, laboratory equipment and the machinery needed for new technology.

When I was in school, they were only beginning to bring in equipment such as lathes. Yes, it was very much cheaper to educate children when one relied on pen, paper, pencils, chalk and blackboards, when overhead projectors were unknown and one was lucky if one had a slide show once a year in a school during the 1940s or 1950s.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): The hon. Gentleman referred to class sizes. Would he think back to when he was at school, when, I expect, he was educated in the traditional method by which the teachers stood in front of the class with a blackboard and the pupils sat facing the teacher in ranks at their desks? Surely, it is much easier to keep control of the class and to impart knowledge to a class so structured than it is with the modern methods under which children sit at little tables each doing their own thing, and the teacher has to try to keep up with what each little group is doing. If we returned to the methods that

were so effective when the hon. Gentleman was at school, would not we be able to manage with larger classes and produce a much better result?

Mr. Griffiths: The hon. Gentleman was assuming that I was satisfied with the quality of education that I received. Indeed, at lunchtime today, I made a speech at Dulwich college on Labour's proposals for the future of education, which was well received, in which I explained where I felt that my own education could have been improved.

Whether the children are taught in serried rows or in groups in a class room is irrelevant. Instead, we must focus on the outcome of their education. In my case, in many subjects, the outcome was very good; in other subjects, it was not good. I was sitting in a row when I was being taught subjects A and B, but the outcome was far better in one subject than the other. It would seem that the rows within the class room were irrelevant. Far more important was the relationship between myself and the teacher and whatever else it was that motivated me. That is why it is so wrong to try to provide blanket solutions or to mount a blanket attack on what teachers are doing in schools.

Unfortunately, pupil-teacher ratios are rising in primary schools, despite the headline improvement in funding. Hiding behind that fact and not recognising that there are problems are perhaps reasons why all the difficulties to which the hon. Member for Romford referred have been placed on our doorstep. We have been far too prepared to defend our own positions, wherever we may find ourselves in the political and education spectrums, without looking too closely at the complications that arise in trying to ensure that children are taught effectively.

The headline figures tell us that there are better performances at GCSE examinations and at A-level. More children are going on to higher education of various sorts. Against that background, one would have to say that the hon. Member for Romford was entirely misplaced when he expressed fears about the education system. I was in sympathy, however, with much that he had to say about standards. Despite the good headline figures that reflect progress in the post-war period, we must deal with complaints that basic literacy and numeracy standards are not high enough to enable employers to have confidence in youngsters when they come to them for work. We know, too, that some of our comparisons with international competitors show that we are not as good as we should be.

We can spread the blame where we like, but it should be acknowledged that some good ideas, in principle, were being thrown up in the 1970s—for example, a national curriculum and schools having greater control of their budgets. Unfortunately, those ideas were implemented in a way that has proved to be counterproductive.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I am listening to the hon. Gentleman with great interest. Unfortunately, even the best motivated teachers in a school frequently find themselves without any serious basis of comparison with what is being achieved by better schools elsewhere when educating pupils of a similar calibre. Is it not disappointing that the National Union of Teachers should set its face against one of the simplest methods of informing teachers what can be achieved, in the form of tests?

Mr. Griffiths: That is where one of the great confusions arises. The NUT is not opposed either to the assessment or testing of pupils. Its membership, by means of a ballot conducted throughout the union, decided that it would continue with the assessment of children to provide information about the progress of children for the children themselves and for the parents. At the same time, it did not believe that this year's national curriculum tests should be compulsory, because the tests this year will be drastically changed next year.

The union's membership is happy to ensure that the testing system is the right one, but it does not see why it is necessary to force all schools to take a test this year that is not likely to be a similar one next year. Let us be clear that NUT teachers have no problem with ideas about assessment and testing, although they have specific opposition to this year's testing alone. There is no problem about the future or about the outcome of the Dearing review, when—let us hope—there will be a system of both assessment and testing.

We should not forget that the Dearing review places greater emphasis on the assessment of pupils than on specific testing. I hope that, following the review, we shall have a system of assessment and testing with which teachers can be comfortable in the context of their work load. I hope also that they will feel that they are providing information to parents that will be genuinely helpful to them in assessing the progress of their children and the way in which the school is performing.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Will the hon. Gentleman accept that the position of the NUT as he has described it from his perception was not that which most of us understood from listening to the union's representatives at its national conferences as shown on television—or will he sensibly disown the speakers from the London borough of Islington, who made such a lot of noise?

Mr. Griffiths: As a consultant for the NUT, I was at the conference. I was amazed and extremely concerned when I heard some of the things that were said there. I am entirely confident, however, from my knowledge of teachers who are in their class rooms and who do not work through the structures of the union to attend its conference, that many of the speeches did not reflect the views of most members of the union.

I was trying to explain that the NUT's policy on assessment and testing is not one of blanket opposition. It has specific complaints about this year's tests and it is involved in the consultation process within the Dearing review. It is looking forward to the final proposals. I hope that the proposals will be of a nature that will enable teachers and pupils to have information on progress to pass on to parents as well as information about the way in which the school itself is performing.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): Am I to understand that, after all, the NUT will be supporting the full programme of testing? Does the hon. Gentleman understand that parents are seeking not only an assessment from the child's teacher but a comparison with other children throughout the country? In the absence of that information, the parent will never know whether the child is performing well. We should not rely on the individual teacher.

Mr. Griffiths: It is a matter of assessment and testing. That is what the Dearing review is about, as the hon. Lady will recognise. As I have said, the review placed greater emphasis on assessment than testing, but the two processes go together. Parents have a right to information about their

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child's progress. The school needs to produce information about the way in which it is educating children who attend it.

The hon. Lady and I may part company over the fact that I do not believe that it is the job of the Department for Education to spend millions of pounds publishing national lists of results. Schools can publish those results and if that information is used by the newspapers or whatever, that is entirely up to them. However, the Department for Education should not have to spend millions of pounds to disseminate information which schools should make available to the parents of their pupils.

Mr. Don Foster: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Secretary of State for Education may wish to consider seriously the decision taken by the Secretary of State for Scotland to introduce a system of testing and assessment with which, I suspect, Conservative Members would be entirely happy, as would parents and teachers throughout the country?

Mr. Griffiths: There is a great deal of merit in the Scottish system. The Labour party is following closely how that system works in Scotland to discover whether the benefits can be translated into an English situation—and perhaps even into a Welsh situation, who knows?

Testing and assessment are required. The hon. Member for Romford referred to English literature. I also studied English literature. While the hon. Gentleman's examples were lurid, I entirely agree that they are not suitable material to be found in most classrooms for children in their early and mid teens.

The hon. Member said that Professor Eagleton had the support of 20 professors. That may be 20 professors too many, but we are still talking about only a small minority of those involved in education. We should really consider what is happening in classrooms.

I taught for 13 years and when I marked my pupils' work, without fail I marked spelling errors. I always put the correct spelling in the margin and I always drew that to the attention of my pupils. On some occasions, I even made students write out those words to reinforce the correct spelling.

Lady Olga Maitland: Not only is it appropriate to point out spelling mistakes, it is important to mark down work when a child fails to produce correct spelling, grammar and punctuation, because if that is not done, the child will never learn the disciplines that are involved.

Mr. Griffiths: I always corrected grammar if it was wrong in a sentence. Yes, I told pupils that they would lose marks. If an essay was worth eight out of 10 or an A in terms of its content, it could lose marks and even a grade if the spelling and grammar were atrocious. However, those judgments must be made against the principle that teachers should teach children how to spell and write properly. There should be no mistake about that. One should not then try to tar the whole of the teaching profession, and all English teachers, because of a few lurid examples of what happens in a tiny minority of schools. We should get it right in those schools, but we should not give the impression that the whole of the system is contaminated by bad practice.

Lady Olga Maitland: I thank the hon. Gentleman for being so patient. With regard to spelling, does he agree that teachers must conduct regular weekly spelling tests? Why do what I call the rather soft left members of the teaching profession resist those tests?

Mr. Griffiths: As I did not teach English at the stage when I would expect children to be doing spelling tests, I cannot rely on my personal experience. However, as a pupil, I learnt lists of words. I did not find that that inhibited my ability to enjoy English. I certainly believe that such tests should be part of the way in which teachers can teach English. If spelling tests have died out, I believe that they should be revived.

The point about Sir Ron Dearing's review is that it saved the Government from the worst breakdown in our education system in living memory. Sir Ron Dearing saved the Government from a breakdown in our schools. We should recognise the Government's courage in accepting the recommendations of the Dearing review because that amounted to a complete U-turn on everything that was said and done before that point.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Eric Forth): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way and I am equally grateful for his kind words. However, he will acknowledge that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State recognised that there was a problem in the development of the curriculum and testing last year. He asked Sir Ron Dearing to come in, to consider the problem impartially and speedily and to suggest solutions. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State then accepted those suggestions. I am sure that that puts the hon. Gentleman's kind words in context.

Mr. Griffiths: I entirely agree that Sir Ron Dearing was appointed on the Secretary of State's initiative. However, he was appointed because there was total deadlock between virtually the whole of the teaching profession, the Secretary of State and parents who made it quite clear that they were concerned about what was happening. The Secretary of State had to find a way out and Sir Ron Dearing proved to be that way out.

I pay credit to the Secretary of State for recognising the need to appoint Sir Ron Dearing and for accepting all the principles behind the Dearing review. In the meantime, nearly £500 million had been spent on introducing the curriculum which was just about to go through a massive transformation because of the appointment of Sir Ron Dearing. To return to my earlier point, this represents a missed opportunity in the history of education in this country.

Back in 1976, the Prime Minister of the day, now Lord Callaghan, effectively started the debate about the national curriculum and general standards in our schools. The Conservative Government picked up the baton when they came to power. Unfortunately, instead of engaging in proper consultation, they had a view of the national curriculum, assessment and testing and they pushed it through despite the protests and objections of virtually everyone in education. If the Government had only listened at that point, hundreds of millions of pounds could have been saved and we might have reached the point that we will be reaching in the next year or two, three or four years earlier and without the travail, confrontation, damage and breakdown that have occurred in our education system in the meantime.

The national curriculum may be the most serious example of ill-considered spending of money. However, we must also consider the Government's grant-maintained schools initiative which is slowly but surely grinding to a halt. There has been a massive waste of money in the introduction of grant-maintained schools not only in respect of the Government's ploys to encourage more schools to go grant maintained, but in respect of the way in which those schools, at the earliest stage, were given additional and extra funding which resulted in state schools —local authority schools—losing out. Millions of pounds were lost there. It can be argued that the assisted places scheme, at a cost of something like £3,500 a place in 1993, is not the most effective use of resources in improving our education system.

Dr. Spink: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way to me again; I thank him for his patience. Can he tell us the Labour party's policy with regard to grant-maintained schools? Would Labour continue to support them or close them down? While he is talking about the Labour party's education policy, could he tell us its policy in all other areas of education, because the House and the rest of the nation are waiting to hear what it is?

Mr. Griffiths: Our policy on grant-maintained schools is clear. Obviously, the hon. Gentleman finds it difficult to keep up with the news. Our policy is that the appointed Funding Agency for Schools would be abolished, and grant-maintained schools would continue, but they would not have that status. They would be run like any other locally maintained schools. The whole of the funding of schools would be reviewed. That is currently being examined by the Select Committee on Education, and the Government have their own common funding formula process going on.

Dr. Spink: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Griffiths: If you wait for a moment, you also asked me to develop the whole of Labour's education policy in your wide intervention.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman means me, whom he should be addressing.

Mr. Griffiths: I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Grant-maintained schools would continue to exist. They would continue to have an independent role like any locally managed school. Indeed, the Labour party is looking at a number of options for types of local management because we found that many heads are not happy with the type of local management that they have at present. Some of them feel that they have too much; some feel that they have too little.

Dr. Spink: I am still confused about the Labour party's policy on grant-maintained schools. Would the schools exist with total management control of the governing bodies consisting essentially of parents of children at those schools, or would the status of the schools change?

Mr. Griffiths: I am astonished by what the hon. Gentleman said, because the majority of governors of grant-maintained schools are not parents. As he said, parents are not the majority. In developing its policies, the Labour party is looking at proposals to enable more members of a governing body to be elected rather than appointed, as happens at present. The governing body of a grant-maintained school would probably still be substantially what it is at present, but any changes introduced for greater democracy would apply to grant-maintained schools as locally maintained and managed schools, so the status would be gone. Let us make it clear: the status would be gone, but the schools would continue to exist and would be managed in much the same way as they are at present.

There has been a whole series of Government initiatives which I shall not dwell on now. The assisted places scheme and the city technology colleges have all cost a lot of extra money which has been ploughed into the system. Much more of the Government's money has been given to those schools than to other schools, and the rest of the state sector has been badly let down. It is that unfairness which has caused so many of the problems that we have today.

I shall set out some of the positive things that need to be done in education to combat some of the problems raised by the hon. Member for Romford. First, we would give priority to nursery education. The research evidence in this country and abroad is strong and shows that good-quality education gives children the best start in life. Over a period, the investment in nursery education would be paid back time and again in savings for the state.

Lady Olga Maitland: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I totally agree that nursery education in one form or another is essential for young children. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that 90 per cent. of children in this country already have nursery provision and, more important, there must be a diversity of provision for them? We do not want to be so prescriptive on the development of toddlers that we are forcing them down a road which is unsuitable. Surely, we need to be flexible with toddlers, and 90 per cent. of them are already provided for.

Mr. Griffiths: That is a myth. Ninety per cent. of three and four-year-olds in England and, indeed, in Wales do not receive nursery education. It is true that 90 per cent. of three and four-year-olds have some experience in a social grouping for some part of the week. That may be in a nursery school, a nursery class or a playgroup, and the provision is often only part time.

The way in which Labour would tackle the problem is to meet parental demand. If parents want nursery provision, it will be provided over a period. If they want playgroups, we will ensure through the standards we set and the support we give to playgroups that that will be a good-quality experience. We would not want to have a total blanket and say that everyone must do this or that. We are saying that nursery education gives children an excellent start to their learning lives. We would set in motion a programme to provide nursery education for those parents who want it for their children. If parents want playgroups, we will ensure that there is good financial support and a good standard set to ensure that the experience is good for children. Let us have no doubt about that. We would not force anyone to take up a nursery place. What I am saying is that we would develop a programme to meet demand.

I shall examine some of the issues on expenditure. First, the Government already provide money for under-five services through the standard spending assessment. Some local education authorities use all that money and more on providing a large number of nursery places. Other local education authorities do not use any of the money for that sort of provision. By a system of meeting parental demand,

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those authorities where the money is not spent on such a provision, but where there is a demand, would have to begin to reorder their spending priorities. The money is already provided by the Government, so no extra cash whatever would be involved.

Mr. Forth: That is startling news which we should like the hon. Gentleman to develop—my colleagues would agree that he should be given time to do so. He seems to be introducing a new element of central Government compulsion on local education authorities. It is an interesting thought which I should like him to develop. The hon. Gentleman might also suggest which other elements of education would be sacrificed to this new priority which he would compel LEAs to adopt.

Mr. Griffiths: For a start, there will be no element of compulsion in the sense of making it a statutory duty for places to be provided. There is, however, a duty for the education authority to look at ways of providing nursery education where there is demand for it.

The hon. Gentleman's Department, the Department of the Environment or the Treasury—place the responsibility where you will—already provides money which is theoretically available for this purpose, but many LEAs do not use it. That is all I am saying.

In some authorities where the Conservatives lost control at the election, there has been a re-ordering of priorities. Money has been provided for nursery education without any increase in the tax being levied by those authorities, other than for inflation. We do not need to raise any scare stories about how it will be done. In the Government's own immortal words, it will be—to a certain extent—as resources allow.

In addition, we will divert spending from areas such as city technology colleges—although that aspect has more or less died a death—and the assisted places scheme. Those who are in the system would continue to be served, but money earmarked for the future of those areas could be brought in to nursery education. There are a number of options to be looked at before we begin to think about the additional spending.

It is an important area and, as I was saying before that series of interventions, the best-researched account of what happens where good-quality nursery education is provided is an American study which covered 27 years. Children from the same area were studied, and those who had the nursery education experience were compared with those who did not.

At the age of 27, those who had had nursery education had higher earnings. More of them were home owners, and had attained a higher level of education in school. The cost of meeting their special educational needs was not as high as for those who did not have nursery education, and fewer were receiving social security benefits. Far fewer of them had been involved in crime and there were far fewer teenage pregnancies.

All in all, through extra taxation, fewer benefits and less money paid in relation to crime and imprisonment, there was a saving of $7 for every dollar invested in the system for those children who had gone through the nursery system. It is difficult for the Government to look at the long-term situation, but that is an investment in children which not only did well for them but, over a period, was good for the country.

Far fewer of them were involved in crime. Is not that something which we all want to achieve? The American experience suggests that that is one way of doing it.

A part of the Highscope system is the close and cultivated relationship between the schools, teachers and parents. We would want to encourage such a partnership throughout the schooling system. One way of catching the parents, and catching them young, is by having nursery education. Parents are far happier being involved initially at that stage than when they are involved in secondary schools. We believe that that is one way of improving those relationships, and it will help to make schools more effective.

We do not believe that there is one blueprint which the Government can impose on every school. We know that there is a series of ways in which successful schools are organised and led. It should be the Government's job to make sure that the examples of good practice are widely disseminated, and that schools have the opportunity to look at them and to take them up.

I know that the so-called assertive discipline method is being taken on by many schools. After using the system for a year, a school in the Wirral that I visited doubled the numbers of children who were getting the top three grades at GCSE. The school is expecting a further improvement in its results this year. The Government should be actively encouraging those things, and should not be trying—as they did with the national curriculum and its method of assessment and testing—to ram it down the throats of teachers and telling them that this is the way to improve results. With the Dearing review, we now have had a complete change.

We want to move forward sensitively with the best practice. We should not beat teachers over the head and lambast them. We should encourage them to do their best, and to make sure that the pupils do their best.

We will be taking a backward step if the Bill dealing with the education of teachers, which will be coming here shortly from the other place, goes through in the form originally envisaged by the Government. The Government have the concept of the school itself being solely responsible for the education and training of those who wish to enter the teaching profession.

An amendment has been passed in the Lords that will tie in the schools with the institutes of higher education. I hope that we will retain that amendment, because we need an improvement in our initial teacher education. I would have thought—and I hope that many other hon. Members agree—that, after 15 years of Conservative rule, there would be higher standards in our institutes of higher education. We must improve them.

Mr. Stephen: I have listened with genuine interest to the hon. Gentleman's remarks. Is he aware that he has already spoken for nearly twice as long as did the proposer of the motion?

Mr. Griffiths: I am aware of that. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the record, he will find that more than half of that time has been taken dealing with interventions. I will say one or two more critical things about teacher education, and then I will give the hon. Gentleman the chance to make the speech that he is obviously bursting to make.

We need better teacher education, and far better professional development and in-service training in our schools. We also need to introduce a one-year, or possibly two-year, induction for new teachers. New teachers far too often operate under the fear of failure. There is a culture where if a new teacher goes into a class and does not successfully teach or control it, he is dubbed a failure straight away. The teacher will feel a failure, and other teachers will regard him as such.

A proper method of induction could get rid of that approach, which has often stopped teachers from developing properly, and we could have good-quality teachers. I know that it is happening in some schools. The school in which my daughter started to teach two years ago had a superb induction scheme from which she benefited, and she has made great strides in settling down in that school. So it is being done.

If there is good-quality initial teacher education and good-quality professional development and training, one also must be able to say that those teachers who cannot teach must go. Let us make no bones about it. There must be proper and clear provision for teachers who, with all that help, turn out not to be able to communicate with children to end their connection with the school. That needs to be done clearly.

In our consultations, those involved in education have said that they are happy, given quality initial teacher education, quality professional development, quality induction and support, that when people cannot teach, they should not be in the classroom. Let us make no bones about that.

The issue of religious education and the role of assembly in schools has been mentioned. Let us make it clear that a school cannot be a substitute for either the home or the Church when it comes to religious education and assemblies. Yes, schools should provide religious education and should provide assemblies in which moral values can be inculcated or demonstrated to children. But we should not expect schools to make up for the deficiencies of parents or for the Church. Let us be clear about that. What the National Association of Head Teachers said about the difficulties for schools in the context of religious education was absolutely true. There are not people with the skills in our schools to take on such roles.

Dr. Spink: Train them.

Mr. Griffiths: Yes, they need to be trained, but one cannot go rushing in if one does not have the people to do it.

Lady Olga Maitland: It was done in the past.

Mr. Griffiths: If the hon. Lady thinks that the religious education and assemblies that we had in the past are the key to the future, I should point out that while there were good examples in many places, there were just as many, if not more, in which that approach failed. One might argue that that is one of the reasons why we are where we are today. It is obviously a fruitful area of discussion. I now give the Floor to other hon. Members.

5.32 pm

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): The hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths), who admitted to us that he spent much of his life before coming into the House as a teacher, sitting in a raised position gazing at benches full of recalcitrant and obtuse pupils to whom he tried to impart the arts of spelling and learning, must rub his eyes this afternoon because he is in exactly the reverse position. He is in the learning seat this afternoon and he is confronted here by a line of persistent and patient teachers. He is the pupil. We are doing our best to penetrate his rather obtuse and impervious intellect with the lessons that he has to learn.

The hon. Gentleman is being forced to take extra classes as a result of the arrangements of the House. It is to the credit of the great corps of able teachers, instructors and expositors on these Benches that they have turned out in such quantity and displayed such considerable wit and knowledge in trying to teach this pupil something. I believe that he is not entirely impervious and that by the time we get to 7 o'clock he may have learnt his lesson. We shall have to wait and see.

I join my right hon. and hon. Friends in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) on his good luck in winning the ballot, his good judgment in selecting this worthwhile topic and, above all, on the very good speech that he made. It was one of the few speeches that we shall be tempted to look up and refer to again after *Hansard* has been printed to learn pearls of wisdom. My hon. Friend's motion specifies education in the context of the need to safeguard the younger generation. I should like to say a few words in that context about religious education. I believe that most people consider that religious education has a vital part to play in the safeguarding objective which my hon. Friend's motion specifies.

Any mention of the topic of religious education immediately puts the spotlight on the Department for Education's famous circular 1/94—that is to say the first circular for 1994—entitled "Religious education and collective worship". The circular issued official guidance to local education authorities on the two vital topics of religious education and collective worship. It is a working guide or maker's handbook, so to speak, to the provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988 and the Education Act 1993. I believe that the circular, with which my hon. Friend the Minister will be familiar, is an historic document. It reflects a period of debate and decision making about religious education and collective worship in maintained schools of which future historians will not only take careful note but note with astonishment.

In our tolerant, secular and multi-faith age, is it really true that our House of Commons—indeed, our Parliament because the House of Lords was greatly involved—has legislated that

> "All maintained schools must provide religious education and daily collective worship for all registered pupils and promote their spiritual, moral and cultural development.
>
> Local agreed RE syllabuses for county schools . . . must in future reflect the fact that religious traditions in the country are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of other principal religions.
>
> Collective worship in county schools and equivalent grant-maintained schools must be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character, though not distinctive of any particular Christian denomination."

Is it really true that the House of Commons and the House of Lords have put into the statute book those clear-cut and specific requirements for the teaching of moral and ethical truths on a Christian basis? Yes, it is true. It is an astonishing fact and one which future generations will scratch their heads about.

[Mr. Michael Alison]

The fact that the circular has been issued with the clarity and unequivocal commitment to the teaching predominantly of Christianity and Christian worship in our schools reflects enormous credit on the integrity and clear-headedness, not to say the political and personal courage, of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and his predecessors, ably assisted and supported by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Schools, who will reply to the debate, and perhaps especially the Minister of State in another place, Baroness Blatch.

Lest my right hon. and hon. Friends or anyone else should fear that they have performed a legislative confidence trick in the circular, and that the guidance, and the 1988 and 1993 Acts which it reflects, represent the work of unrepresentative zealots foisting unwanted provisions on a secular and irreligious, although correspondingly passive and apathetic, population—lest that myth should ever gain currency—I remind the House of some significant background facts and figures. Some people are trying to promulgate the idea that we have slipped through an unrepresentative measure.

First, support for the religious education and worship provisions set out in the then Education Reform Act 1988 was massive and cross-party when it was considered, debated and voted on in the House. In a free vote on the relevant clauses in the Education Reform Bill—I emphasise that it was a free vote—the voting was 372 to 108, which was a majority of 264 in favour of writing into the face of the Act that religious education should be compulsory and predominantly Christian. It is not easy to score a large majority on a free vote.

Secondly, the voting reflected faithfully, as free votes so often do, the British population's feelings on the issue. That national consciousness and preference is well reflected in the latest 1992-93 report on religion, "British Social Attitudes", which found that 69 per cent. of respondents believed in God, 64 per cent. were associated with a religious denomination and 70 per cent. favoured school prayers. That is the real world and the real national pulse that that massive majority vote reflected.

Lady Olga Maitland *rose—*

Mr. Win Griffiths *rose—*

Mr. Alison: I will give way first to the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) out of courtesy to the Front-Bench spokesman and then to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Win Griffiths: I am becoming a little worried because the hon. Member said that his purpose in this debate was to put me on a learning curve and educate me. I voted in favour of the amendment to which he referred and I am well aware of the survey. When people write to me about religious education I mention that to them.

Mr. Alison: I am happy to accept that rebuke from the hon. Gentleman and hope that it will be temporary. The art of teaching is reinforcing a pupil's knowledge and exposing the lacuna associated with it, which is what I shall do.

Lady Olga Maitland: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is symptomatic of the need for a properly structured Christian education in schools that a poll at Easter discovered that one in four children are unable to recite the Lord's prayer? Does he also agree that it is disappointing that a vast number of local standing advisory councils on religious education have failed to provide a model Christian syllabus? There is a strong tendency to undermine our efforts to bring Christian teaching into our schools in favour of what I would describe as a multicultural mish-mash.

Mr. Alison: I take my hon. Friend's point and share her shock and dismay at the evidence of lack of knowledge and understanding that she exposes. Let us take comfort from the fact that the Education Reform Act dates back to 1988 and the subsequent Education Act back to 1993 and that sometimes it takes a little time for a rocket to lift off into orbit, but into orbit it will go. There is land to be possessed and we will possess it.

I was trying to suggest that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and his ministerial colleagues are not out on a limb in any sense in the lead that they have given on religious education. I shall remind the House of one or two other people who are out on a limb. I have some information to impart to the hon. Member for Bridgend —Mr. Nigel de Gruchy is one such person. He is the general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers and it is clear from his article in *The Daily Telegraph* on 20 April that when he calls for the scrapping of the legal requirement for religious education and worship—one can hardly credit it —he really wants secular schools. That is not what most people want, as I tried to suggest, and certainly not what most mums and dads want. However, that is what Nigel de Gruchy wants. Was the hon. Member for Bridgend fully apprised of the fact that that was what a major union leader was calling for? Perhaps this is the time for him to enter a new learning curve.

Similarly, the recent statement by the National Association of Head teachers argues for all religions to be taught for the same amount of time. Think what it would mean—a supermarket shelf full of the religions of the world, all of which are to be given equal exposure and treatment. The NAHT argues that if that is not possible our schools should be secular.

Nigel de Gruchy and David Hart, the general secretary of the NAHT, appear to want cultural relativism or barren secularism in education—anything other than our Christian heritage.

Dr. Spink: Is my right hon. Friend aware that Nigel de Gruchy said that schools can provide a better and more relevant moral code of ethics than that provided in the Bible?

Mr. Alison: That is the ultimate in presumption and arrogance. Union leaders are out of touch with their own members, let alone with parents. The NAHT argues that a daily act of Christian worship is an impossibility. I believe that David Hart has written in those terms to the Secretary of State. It is ironic that David Hart and the NAHT—a union which predominantly represents primary heads—should make that statement. A few weeks ago the Office for Standards in Education reported on religious education and showed that there is widespread compliance with the law in primary schools. Ofsted inspectors stated:

"all the schools complied with the requirement to provide daily collective worship".

Yet David Hart, who primarily represents primary school heads, told the Secretary of State that it was impossible to provide a daily act of worship. Who is kidding whom?

The real world is the world discovered by the Ofsted inspection. To elaborate on its report, it not only said that "all the schools"—
that it had visited—
"complied with the requirement to provide daily collective worship"—
but that—

"Judged in terms of the quality of the opportunity they provided for social and moral development, standards in these acts of worship were satisfactory or better in 75 per cent of the schools".

Yet the general secretary of the relevant teachers union still said that it is an "impossibility" to conduct an act of worship in primary schools. I am not pretending, of course, that all is well with religious education and collective worship—my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) made that vividly clear in her intervention.

The position in secondary schools is certainly not as good as that reported by Ofsted in its visit to primary schools. There is still much land to be possessed in the relaunch of religious education following the 1988 and 1993 Acts. The Ofsted report contained some daunting facts and figures on the inadequate provision for religious education in primary and secondary schools. For example, it reported

"A high proportion of teachers lacked the confidence, expertise, enthusiasm and interest to teach the subject effectively; many had volunteered because they valued the contribution of RE to the pupils' moral and social education"

It is therefore still very necessary that greater confidence should be imparted to teachers, that more teachers specialise in religious education and that the status of that subject in the school curriculum and in subject provision should rise increasingly and be better regarded.

Let me quote a little vignette from paragraph 68 of the Ofsted report, which shows what could be done. It states:

"Primary heads generally took responsibility for planning and conducting the acts of worship and often used the occasion as a major vehicle for setting standards of behaviour and relationships in the school. Visiting speakers, including local clergy, were invited to most schools during the course of the year and often made an important contribution. Increasingly the teaching staff do not attend school acts of worship. Schools need to consider what such non-attendance signals to pupils and the limits which this may place upon following up themes from worship in the classroom."

Surely the way forward is for a good lead to be given by head teachers and for the maximum use and support to be derived from local clergy and laity. The local laity, who are committed and active in their own churches and denominations, live in the rough and tumble of the real secular world and they therefore have an immense contribution to make in the sphere of religious education. They could be of particular value in acts of worship, because they could help children to identify and integrate their view of life with work and religion.

A more positive lead should be forthcoming from the leaders in my own Church of England—not least some of its bishops and our Church of England Board of Education—in helping to raise the status of religious education and boosting it rather than criticising and denigrating it and collective worship.

I should like to refer in particular to the Board of Education and to an article which appeared on page 506 of this week's edition of *The Tablet*. The board seems to be obsessed with the issue of religious pluralism and religious minorities and the lot and the role of other religions in state religious education rather than with the teaching opportunities offered for the faith of which it is the trustee and custodian. Surely its approach is out of perspective. Just 3 per cent. of children on our own maintained school rolls come from a non-Christian cultural or religious background.

I accept that there are a handful of areas, obviously Bradford is one, where there is a concentration of such religious minorities, but they are offered opt-out provisions under the religious education statutes. Surely the Church of England, through all its hierarchy and bureaucracy, should be seizing the opportunity to develop predominantly Christian religious education in our schools.

Mr. Rowe: Is not it also the case that in many instances those minorities have a far clearer grasp of the importance of religious education to the children of their communities than we appear to evince? When the Archbishop of Canterbury preached to us at the start of this Parliament he said that in his estimation Muslims and other minority religions in this country respected Christians to the extent that they were bold and stood up for their faith and despised them to the extent that they were difficult to define.

Mr. Allson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for putting that important and significant reference on the record.

Anyone who has had any dealings with religious education in the maintained sector knows, for example, that the Islamic community, relatively small though it may be, would much prefer its children to be taught in a Church of England school or a maintained school where religious education is an important and constructive part of the curriculum. After all, for members of that community Jesus is a prophet as much as Mohammed. Those people would much prefer to have their children taught in a Christian context than in a wholly secular one.

I beg my revered superiors in my own Church—the bishops and the Church of England Board of Social Responsibility—to recall that no other European country has such liberal and multifaith religious education as we do in Britain. In virtually all European countries, religious education is almost totally Christian and Christianity is taught as true—the confessional approach. In many states, only practising Christians are permitted to teach the subject. Non-Christian faiths are taught, if they are taught at all, in the upper secondary schools. On this matter, we should take a lesson from Europe.

In the whole of Europe, only France has secular education; even the former communist countries are now putting Christianity back into the timetable. In 1963, in the United States a humanist mother successfully got the Supreme Court to ban school prayer on the ground that it infringed the first amendment requiring the separation of Church and state. I am glad to say that that lady's son is now fighting to have that ruling reversed, because he suffered from a lack of religious education in school. That 1963 ruling is being widely challenged in practically every state of America and the dissatisfaction with the secular education is revealed by the growth in Christian private schools. According to Andrew Greeley, professor of social science at the university of Chicago, 73 per cent. of Americans want daily prayers in state schools. It is surely only a matter of time before the 1963 Supreme Court ruling

[Mr. Alison]

is overturned. Our own Church of England bureaucrats should savour and increasingly represent that spirit and movement.

It is worth reminding my colleagues how inextricably our language, culture and history are bound up with Christianity. You, Madam Deputy Speaker and your successor in the Chair, will need to exercise the wisdom of Solomon in deciding who to call next. You will have to have faith, hope and charity in believing that Madam Speaker's plea for short speeches will be observed. You will need the patience of Job as you sit in the Chair and you probably often wish that you could nip off and watch "Love Thy Neighbour" in the television room. Looking at our colleagues in the round, not many of us are inclined to turn the other cheek. We are more inclined to pursue the policy of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. If one is my hon. Friend the Prime Minister or Leader of the Opposition, one finds many of one's colleagues a thorn in the flesh. One is probably inclined to call some female colleagues Jezebels, some male colleagues Judases. One may even think that *The Times*, or even *The Daily Telegraph*, utters too many Jeremiahs. If one is my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess), one is well known as a good Samaritan, as all those who followed his course to that housing estate where he confronted the yobbo the other day will only too readily know. We hope that the hon. Member for Bridgend in his learning capacity, will have a Damascus road experience before long.

Mr. Win Griffiths: I have already had it.

Mr. Alison: We very much hope that the hon. Gentleman who will follow me to speak will not be all things to all men. It will be difficult for my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), who does not suffer fools gladly, to be sympathetic towards what the hon. Gentleman has to say in that case.

We have here the opportunity of listening to words which represent pearls of great price from my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland). My hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell), since he went into the Whips Office, must have discovered the meaning of the phrase, "Wheels within wheels". My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) is a David confronting the Goliath of British Rail and the French consortium in the massive intrusions on his lovely constituency landscape. The Whip on duty, my hon. Friend the Member for Stevenage (Mr. Wood), will be made a scapegoat if we finish the debate with the wrong vote at the wrong time.

One could go on with many such illustrations. I hope that my speech will not be weighed in the balance and found wanting. The point is that Christianity is deeply written into the texture of our national cultural, religious and social life and we must get RE on to a rising trajectory in the role and the significance that it occupies in the life and teaching of our country.

I am pleased to be able to support the great initiative of my hon. Friend the Member for Romford in launching us into this important debate.

6.2 pm

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): I join all the other hon. Members who have spoken in congratulating the hon. Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) on initiating this important, interesting and wide-ranging debate. I enjoyed his contribution and learnt a great deal from it. I shall not touch on many of his arguments, but I agreed with most of what he said. I especially agreed with his remarks about some of the things that we have seen on our television screens. I share his view that the decision made by the House recently in respect of video nasties was a victory for common sense and an example of the House operating at its best.

I agreed with more of what the hon. Member for Romford had to say than what was said in interventions by some of his hon. Friends. For example, the hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) advocated that we return to the days when pupils sat before their teachers in serried rows. It was reminiscent of the ditty:

"Ram it in, ram it in,
Children's heads are hollow;
Ram it in, ram it in,
Still there's more to follow."

The world of education has learnt a great deal from those days, and some of the approaches to education that have been adopted in our classrooms are much more constructive than was suggested by the hon. Gentleman.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Romford will agree with me in that respect because, in his interesting contribution, he made it clear that he believed—I agree with him—that our education system must be designed to cater for the aptitudes and abilities of individual pupils. That means considering, in part at least, a more individualised approach to what happens in the classroom.

I hope that the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) will not think me discourteous if I do not spend much time in responding to his interesting contribution. He suggested that it was primarily intended as a lesson for the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths). However, I was skulking at the back of the classroom and I picked up a few of the pearls of wisdom. I hope that there will be an opportunity for a full-scale debate in the House both on religious education and on the issue of collective worship in our schools.

It may save time and avoid some of the interventions that may have been planned if I remind the House that, like the hon. Member for Bridgend, I am an adviser to the National Union of Teachers and, like the hon. Member for Bridgend, I attended briefly the NUT conference. However, unlike the hon. Member for Bridgend, I have said publicly in advance of the debate that although I agree with the anxieties of the NUT about testing, I believe that the tactics that it has adopted are incorrect.

The hon. Member for Romford said that he wished to speak about two subjects—education and upbringing. That links, appropriately, what happens in our schools with the role that parents can play in the crucial task of educating people.

Everyone in the House would agree that education is vital, not only for individual pupils, but for the future of our country. There can be no more crucial investment than investment in the education service. I hope that Members will agree that the cost of providing poor education is ultimately greater than the cost of providing a first-class education service for all.

The hon. Member for Bridgend referred to one of those sectors of our education service in which we need to do much more—nursery education. I was disappointed that it was not referred to by the proposer of the motion. I think that it is now accepted by all the major political parties that nursery education and the development of nursery education are crucial. Nothing could be more important than making the right start, and nothing is more damaging than getting it wrong.

The hon. Member for Bridgend made an eloquent case for nursery education. In view of the time, I shall not refer to some of the important issues that he mentioned. The hon. Gentleman was remiss in not being able to present to the House a convincing explanation of the way in which the Labour party would pay for the massive expansion of nursery education for which it calls.

The Liberal Democrat party has made it clear that we would like a massive expansion of nursery education. We believe that that expansion cannot wait, and that it must be instituted as rapidly as possible. We have made it clear that we believe that it will cost a great deal of money—about £806 million annually, although there will be some savings from the 40,000 jobs that will be created by that expansion. A massive building programme will be needed, possibly of the order of £1.5 billion, and a significant training programme will be needed to ensure that all the nursery teachers who will be required have the necessary skills.

We recognise that our programme is ambitious and costly, and that we need to say where the money will come from, which is why we have said honestly that we believe that the money must come from general taxation and, if there is a need and we cannot find it from any other source, general taxation will have to increase to pay for it.

The hon. Member for Bridgend, if he is honest, is saying nothing different from the Government, and that is that nursery education must wait until resources become available.

Mr. Stephen: The hon. Gentleman has said frankly that his party would increase general taxation to improve education. Can he tell us by how much taxation would have to be increased to pay for all the other improvements that his party stands for in health, environment, social services and so on?

Mr. Foster: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Shoreham for giving me an opportunity, but I fear that if I go into the question of health and other matters you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will rule me out of order. I shall perhaps simply remind you that at the time of the last Budget my party put forward a fully costed alternative budget. It included significant improvements in the education service. Although we suggested that taxation should increase, the level that we had in mind was nowhere near that proposed and implemented by the Conservative party. We said at the last election that we would raise taxes if necessary, in marked contrast with the Conservative party, which said nothing of the sort. Indeed, the Conservatives implied to the electorate that they hoped to reduce taxation. Our estimate of the cost of a massive expansion of nursery education is less than half a penny on income tax, at both income tax rates.

The hon. Member for Bridgend has failed to make it clear where the Labour party stands on that matter. That is a pity, because the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) has been going round the country telling people how bad the Conservative party and, to a lesser extent, the Liberal Democrats have been in their nursery education provision. Will the hon. Member for Bridgend remind the hon. Member for Blackburn that his local education authority provides nursery education for less than 19 per cent. of the relevant population, whereas the average for the country as a whole stands at some 24 per cent?

A report published today, entitled "Major's children 94", discusses the feelings and attitudes about which the hon. Member for Romford is so concerned. He would be as disappointed as me to read in that report that the vast majority of young people say that the only reason that they go to school is to meet their friends. I hope that the hon. Gentleman agrees that we should develop our education service in such a way that schools become places which children want to attend because they see the benefits of schooling and a good, rounded education.

One step that we could take would be to deal with the state of our school buildings. Estimates show that the backlog of repair and maintenance amounts to some £4.3 billion. Although the Government have made some interesting and helpful suggestions to tackle truancy, I hope that they will consider tackling the state of school buildings because, if we could make schools attractive, it would go some way towards reducing truancy.

The main thrust of the argument put forward by the hon. Member for Romford, however, linked education with the family. It is crucial that parents are involved in their children's education. Early last week, the National Consumer Council produced a report called "Home and School: Building a Better Partnership". It contained some interesting ideas to develop the concept of the school-parent partnership. I suspect that the Minister will say a few words about that important matter in his winding-up speech.

I hope that the Minister will recognise that the relationship between schools and parents is not just about parents charters. Only today, we learnt that few people understand the content of the patients charter. I suspect that the new parents charter will not go far in developing the link between schools and parents. One way to develop that partnership is by ensuring that parents are given adequate, meaningful and useful information about what is happening in schools, particularly as it affects their children.

The Minister and Conservative Members may say that the Government's current testing and assessment procedures linked to league tables are providing that information, but I entirely disagree. The information is collected through educationally unsound tests. The information from the testing system is partial and does not help parents. The Secretary of State appears to be back-tracking from what he accepted only a few months ago.

The Dearing report, to which reference has already been made, recommended collaboration with the Office for Standards in Education and the School Curriculum Assessment Authority in mounting a research project into the potential of value added as a measure of achievement. In accepting the Dearing report in its entirety, the Secretary of State was presumed by people outside to have accepted the principle of the urgent need to consider the concept of value added as a vital component of league tables and tests.

Mr. Forth *indicated assent.*

Mr. Foster: I note the Minister's acceptance. If that is so, it contrasts strangely with the remarks in a document produced by the Conservative party, in which the Secretary of State, in his capacity as a Member of Parliament representing Oxford, West and Abingdon, referred to my comments and said:

"Mr. Foster proposes to make the tables 'value-added' . . . distorting the facts and making them unintelligible."

That is strange, given that the Secretary of State accepted the principle of value added. I hope that the Minister will now intervene and put the record straight.

Mr. Forth: I am happy to do so. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State accepts the need for the SCAA and Ofsted to look into ways of establishing meaningful "value-added" concepts in the publication of school results. But neither he nor I, nor any other sensible person, accepts massaging the figures to give the outcome which many people would prefer rather than a true portrayal of the performance of schools that value-added measures would give. We are asking the SCAA to establish a validity of approach, and we eagerly await that.

Mr. Foster: In that case, I agree with the Minister. If he says that he wants a new vehicle that will enable us to make judgments about schools based on issues that include value added, I am more than happy to agree with him, and I hope that that will be introduced as rapidly as possible.

The issue of parent-school relationships means that parents should have more opportunity to know what is going on and have a voice in it. I hope that the parents' advice shops that have been established in one or two parts of the country, and the conciliation centres to which parents can go in cases of dispute, will be expanded. Although I do not advocate it, I see some merit in looking into the possibility of establishing an educational ombudsman.

The hon. Member for Bridgend mentioned the proposed legislation on teacher training. Although I share his anxieties about the proposed legislation, which we shall have much opportunity to debate in the House and in Committee, I hope that during the Bill's passage we shall discuss the importance of ensuring that teacher-training courses instruct student teachers on how best to work with parents and the local community. That should be part of teacher-training programmes, but currently it rarely is.

Once in post, teachers need to be given time to develop their relationships with parents and with the wider community. That is very difficult for many of them, because of the overloading that they have experienced through the national curriculum, testing and assessment procedures and the massive increase in bureaucracy that has resulted from much of the Government's recent legislation.

Above all, it is crucial for parents to have a better chance of a say in the education process. Education, after all, should be everyone's business. Many parents currently find it difficult to know how they are expected to have a say, however—partly owing to recent legislation that has centralised power, transferring it from local communities and local government to the Secretary of State and often passing it on to quangos. Such bodies are undoubtedly remote and undemocratic, operating at some distance from parental groups and holding many meetings in secret.

Lady Olga Maitland: I was delighted to hear the hon. Gentleman say that parents should have more input. Does he agree that it was parents who opted for grant-maintained schools? Given that parental choice brought the schools into that sector, does the Liberal party intend not to sweep them away?

Mr. Foster: This is, I think, the third time this year that the hon. Lady has asked me that question. I shall give her the same reply again. I do not agree with grant-maintained schools. I do not think it right for a particular group of parents, at a particular time, to vote on the future for all time of an individual school which, after all, should be the property of the wider community.

Given that the hon. Lady is so concerned about parental choice, and believes that balloting for grant-maintained schools is a good example of the exercise of that choice, I do not understand why she has never agreed with the following proposition: if she is right about that form of voting, why is it not equally right for parents to be allowed to vote, if they so wish, for schools to opt back into local education authority control? But the hon. Lady will never agree with that. She is prepared to vote for parental choice only on the rare occasions when it supports the party-political dogma of the Conservatives.

Unfortunately, evidence from around the country suggests that very few parents support that political dogma. Only recently, the Secretary of State spoke at the most ill-named conference of all time: "Grant-Maintained Schools—Maintaining the Momentum". There is no momentum towards grant-maintained schools: the number of ballots is declining, as is the number of schools voting yes—to a marked extent. I hope that I have explained to the hon. Lady where I stand and why I disagree with her; but I also hope that I have made clear the crucial importance of parental involvement.

The motion refers specifically to the need to

"encourage a wide diversity of choice in schooling".

The hon. Member for Romford and I agree with that wording, but I suspect that our interpretation of it differs widely. For instance, I would expect the hon. Gentleman to support the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) in her view that the introduction of grant-maintained schools is an example of an increase in diversity and choice; no doubt he supports the principle of city technology colleges for the same reason.

I disagree with that interpretation. I disagree with the concept that is implicit in the hon. Gentleman's reference to choice, which suggests that he assumes that all parents can choose where to send their children. In fact, the vast majority of parents have no choice at all—which is why it is crucial for the choice and diversity that he mentions to apply in each school. Each school should be able to meet pupils' specific aptitudes and abilities—words used by the hon. Gentleman.

The Government are offering a false prospectus in regard to choice. If parents had the choice, they would choose smaller classes, more books and equipment and teachers with much higher morale. I was disturbed to learn today from a report that the number of teachers retiring on grounds of ill health has almost doubled since the introduction of the national curriculum.

If the hon. Member for Romford is truly concerned about improving education and upbringing, perhaps he will ask his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education—the Lynda Snell of British politics—to end the constant stream of quick-fix gimmicks and concentrate

instead on investing in education, returning to the co-operation and partnership that should be the basis for it and ensuring excellence for all.

6.25 pm

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): I am pleased to be able to speak, and privileged to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert)—a valued colleague in London politics—and my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison). Both are very sound on the topics that they have discussed at some length. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Romford on his success in the ballot and his tabling of this important motion.

I want to concentrate on a specific part of the motion which caught my eye—the following words:

"That this House, recognising one generation's responsibility for the next".

The implication is that the House must seek to educate the next generation.

I have a particular interest in London politics. Inner London has now experienced four years of education without the unlamented Inner London education authority. Education in inner London has been conducted by the 12 new education authorities, three of which are excellent Conservative authorities; eight are Labour and one, in Tower Hamlets, is controlled by the Liberal Democrats. What we sought to do in the Education Reform Act 1988 in dispensing with ILEA, which had failed a generation of London children—if not two—is now coming to light.

For many years, ILEA had been at the bottom of the list of education authorities. That is why, following the 1987 general election, the Conservative Government sought to abolish it in that historic 1988 Act. Now, after four years of the new education authorities which came into being in 1990, we are seeing results. The three Conservative authorities—Wandsworth, Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea—gained higher than average GCSE results, according to the 1993 tables, than their Labour and Liberal neighbours in the other nine inner London boroughs. The same Conservative authorities gained more A-level points per student than the Labour authorities, and many more than the Liberal Democrat authority in Tower Hamlets.

Mr. Win Griffiths: The hon. Gentleman has given us some interesting statistics. Will he tell us what the equivalent performances were four years ago for those schools in Westminster, Wandsworth and Kensington and Chelsea?

Mr. Tracey: The performance of those schools in the last years of ILEA was far worse than it is now. Their performances are far better now. As I shall explain later, there is a desire among parents in Labour authorities in inner London to move to neighbouring Conservative authorities across borough boundaries. That is causing problems. One is now far less likely to gain successful GCSE passes in the Labour and Liberal boroughs than in Conservative boroughs. If one lives in a Labour borough, one is 39 per cent. more likely to leave school with no GCSE passes. If one lives in a Liberal borough, the figure is 50 per cent. That proves why there was a real need for this generation of politicians to correct the iniquitous position that existed before.

Mr. Don Foster: Does the hon. Gentleman recall the debate in the Chamber only a few minutes ago when the Minister agreed with me about the vital importance of considering the issue of value added? In that respect, is the hon. Gentleman aware that Article 26 produced a value-added-based league table of local education authorities and that the position of Tower Hamlets rose dramatically to eighth in the entire country?

Mr. Tracey: The hon. Gentleman is new to this House and he was not here at the time of the debates on the Education Reform Act 1988. We have heard all about the Liberals' value-added results and the word is that they have been massaged by the Liberal Democratic party to try to deceive the people of this country.

The claim that Labour authorities and Liberal Democrat authorities have a desire to spend more money on education than Conservative authorities, which seek to make cuts, is fallacious. The education spending of the Conservative authorities in inner London—Wandsworth, Westminster, and Kensington and Chelsea—has totalled on average £14.01 million more than the Government have recommended. The Labour authorities, by contrast, have spent on average £5.82 million less than was recommended by the Government. The Liberals in Tower Hamlets—here is another figure that the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) may wish to massage—have underfunded education by £18.46 million. That completely blows asunder the claim by the Labour and Liberal parties that they are committed to the education of our children. There is no evidence of that in inner London.

I am sorry to have to build on the pain of the Opposition parties, but the band D council tax charge in inner-London Conservative authorities is £171.67 less than in Liberal-controlled Tower Hamlets, and £249 less than in Labour authorities in inner London.

The evidence of the quality of Conservative education in inner London has led to parents in surrounding boroughs wishing to move across the boundary line, as is their right, to seek a good Conservative education for their children. That has meant that 4,000 pupils from surrounding boroughs have come into Conservative boroughs in inner London. In Wandsworth, 2,255 pupils travel from Lambeth each day. That is an example of parents voting with their feet to seek a better education for their children.

My final argument relates again to people moving across borough boundaries. My hon. Friend the Minister will not be surprised to hear that I am about to raise with him one of the most serious issues of concern to parents in my constituency of Surbiton and in the education authority of the royal borough of Kingston upon Thames. It relates to the Greenwich judgment in the High Court, which considered the situation that arose as a result of the break-up of the Inner London education authority. Parents in Lewisham wanted their children to have a better education and began to move them into Greenwich. Greenwich tried to stop them, and was challenged by parents in Lewisham. The High Court ruled that parents in Lewisham had the right to move their children to Greenwich.

My education authority is top of the GCSE league table. Parents in the education authorities that surround Kingston upon Thames—Richmond, Surrey, Epsom and Ewell and Merton—seek to send their children into Kingston upon Thames. We have two excellent maintained grammar schools—the Tiffin boys' school and Tiffin girls' school. Every year, about 1,000 parents from the surrounding

[Mr. Tracey]

boroughs seek to gain entry for their children to those schools, but there are only 120 places available in each school.

There is a knock-on effect in that the other, non-selective schools in Kingston upon Thames find themselves under pressure from other parents in Kingston who are seeking places. The result is that some parents in my constituency feel that they are being denied a proper choice of school because, as a result of the Greenwich judgment, people are crossing the borough boundary to seek places for their children in our schools.

Parents, especially of girls, seek single-sex schools for their children. That is very true in relation to two schools in the royal borough of Kingston: Tolworth school in my constituency and Coombe girls' school in the Kingston upon Thames constituency, for which at any given time between 20 and 100 people are on the waiting list.

There is enormous frustration among those parents who believe that choice is being denied to them. My hon. Friend the Minister and his colleagues in the Department for Education will say that those parents can seek other schools, possibly in other boroughs, but the parents do not wish to do so. They say that if they live in the education authority with the best standards in the country, they should be able to send their children to those schools. They say that schools in surrounding boroughs are not so good.

That is the dilemma that they face. They live in a borough with a high standard of education. It is about time that there was true justice for those parents. The Government should consider this problem and ensure that my constituents are able to look after the generations to come by ensuring that their children have the best possible education.

6.39 pm

Mr. David Ames (Basildon): One hundred and twenty years ago it was said:

"Upon the education of the people of this country the fate of this country depends."

They were the words of Benjamin Disraeli and they were echoed by my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert), another Essex man. I was especially taken by the part of my hon. Friend's motion which states that there must be

"resistance to harmful influences to which"

children

"are exposed".

The motion is in two parts: it refers to the education provided in our schools and to the education that we, as parents, give children at home.

I listened to the utterances of the two Opposition socialist parties, but heard no new ideas, and all their proposals would cost money. I do not believe that one necessarily has to spend more money in order to provide a better education. My children go to excellent state schools in my constituency of Basildon and I also went to an excellent state school.

Mr. Stephen: My hon. Friend will be aware that more money is spent per pupil under this Government than at any time in our history. Is he satisfied that the taxpayer is getting value for money?

Mr. Ames: No, I am not. I hope that, when the two Opposition socialist parties are campaigning during the local elections and when Mrs. Smith comes to the door and says that the tax changes are shocking and that she is worried about the changes in value added tax, the canvassers will be honest and admit that if they were in government, they would increase her taxes even further. However, I take my hon. Friend's point.

I was also worried by what I heard about nursery education. There are excellent pre-school playgroups in my constituency. They do a magnificent job, but they are worried about what is being said about nursery education. They do not wish their role in the education of our children to be usurped by new plans.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Schools has visited my constituency and will agree that standards are improving in all the schools there. Two years ago, the head of one of the seven secondary schools in my constituency criticised the league tables because he was worried that his school would be towards the bottom. He wrote a leading article earlier this year, praising the same league tables because he was delighted that his school now seemed to be climbing to the top. Of course, Chalvedon school in my constituency was the first grant-maintained school in Essex. I am delighted that, just a short while ago, it was announced that it is to be one of the 12 schools that are to have city technology college status. That is an excellent commendation of the wonderful education that children receive there. Standards in all schools in my constituency are improving; I have cited two examples in particular.

Langdon Hills special school is embarking on a project for children with special learning difficulties. The children are taught in small groups and, in the past 18 months, the schools has managed to achieve remarkable results. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister and his colleagues will reflect on those results. In Basildon, we are especially concerned about dyslexia. Many parents worry when their children have special learning difficulties. Thanks to a wonderful lady called Christine Haggerty, groups of children with special learning difficulties are encouraged to participate in special programmes.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) kindly referred to my clash with yobboes a few weeks ago. There is not time for the House to hear the details of the incident, but the vicar involved, whose wife is a schoolteacher, released my private letter to the press and it subsequently hit the headlines. I had written to him privately to say how shocked I was that a child of theirs could support the yobbo element that I and others had confronted. In this week's local paper, another local vicar has written in support.

Schools certainly have a very important job to do between 9 am and 3 pm, but the education of our children cannot be left to the schools alone. That is why I especially applaud the present Secretary of State for Education who, when he was first appointed, made a marvellous speech about partnership between schools and parents. What happens at home is also important. It is no good some parents leaving their children in front of the television or giving them computer games and expecting them to educate themselves. Unfortunately, not all children go to bed at 7 pm, even when they are told to do so. The general idea is that material that one does not want one's children to see is shown after the 9 pm cut-off point, but that is not always what happens. It behoves us all to ensure that children receive careful supervision.

One hundred and fifty years ago, a Prime Minister said:

"The Youth of a Nation are the trustees of Posterity"—we must not fail them.

6.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Eric Forth): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) and thank him for enabling us to have this debate, which has been important and valuable for a number of reasons. It has reflected accurately the widespread concern about what is happening in society and what we can do about it—an important function of debates such as these. It has also set those concerns mainly in the context of education which, I believe, is correct.

It was instructive that my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) said the supportive things that he did. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for highlighting the great efforts that my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State and the Minister of State have made to introduce new standards, especially in the vital spheres of religious education and collective worship. My right hon. Friend the Member for Selby made no apology—one would not expect him to do so and, in acknowledgement of the nature of our society, nor should any hon. Member—for highlighting the importance of the established Church and of our established religion in providing a framework and point of reference for building what we want to build in our schools in terms of ethical and moral values. That is a point often repeated by the Secretary of State. His favourite phrase in this regard is that schools cannot and should not be value-free zones. In the past two years, that has very much been the message of my right hon. Friends.

My hon. Friend the Member for Romford raised another important point, which was reinforced by my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) and which is one that we must face directly. Whatever we do in terms of legislation and statute; whatever accountability we establish at school level to parents via governors; whatever independent inspection regimes we establish through the excellent work of the Office for Standards in Education; and whatever we ask of our teachers, headteachers and governors, all of whom are vital, in the end we always come back to the role that parents play.

Lady Olga Maitland: Does my hon. Friend agree that parents' role is to provide their children with a stable home and that they should therefore think twice before they divorce, bearing in mind the fact that divorce has a detrimental effect on children's development?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend is correct. I hope that all parents think about the effect on their children of anything that happens in the home or in the family. I am sure that in many cases—although not all and not enough—such considerations are paramount in parents' minds when they think about such matters.

The problem is this. The Government have been right to give parents a prime role in education, whether in terms of expressing a preference in school, playing a role as governors or whatever. We have encouraged their participation. However, with that goes an element of risk. The risk is that the children of parents who cannot or will not rise to the challenge and co-operate may be vulnerable; in some cases, that vulnerability will go beyond the children of those parents. That is very much our challenge as a society. It is a responsibility which the Government must share, but which they cannot accept in totality. My hon. Friends' concerns so often come back to that point.

Let us consider, for example, the concerns rightly reflected by my hon. Friend the Member for Romford about video nasties. I claim that we have gone a great distance, as a Government, to try to deal with the matter. An important role is played by the British board of control in establishing what videos are appropriate and suitable, and in which circumstances. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has recently introduced new and tough measures, which were widely welcomed in the House. However, when we come down to it, it must surely be the case that what is shown on video recording machines in people's homes can only be the responsibility of parents. Exercise whatever control we may, in the end we come back to that point again and again. With the best will in the world and providing the best framework in schools and in homes, we must face the fact that parents will ultimately determine the standards and responsibilities that are exercised in these important areas.

The same point probably applies in areas such as sex education, from which we have given parents the right to withdraw their children if they believe that that is appropriate. I believe that that was the correct thing for us to do, although I acknowledge that concerns have been caused in some quarters. One of the reasons for such concerns is that, although some parents may have views and beliefs, and may be willing to give their children what they regard as an appropriate sex education, most parents still look to schools to provide sex education in a proper way and within a proper framework of values.

In law, and through circulars and guidance, we have tried to encourage schools to provide sex education within the framework of values, ethics, standards and morality. I hope that the House will forgive me for so frequently quoting my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. As he said, schools must teach not just the plumbing, but the values, which must be built into all the guidance that we give our young people in our schools. That is essential and is part of what we are trying to do.

I believe that the very positive remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for Romford and by my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby reflect the real efforts that we have made in recent years to provide schools with the opportunity to give young people a framework, a sense of values and points of reference throughout the teaching that they receive, whether in the matter of daily collective worship and religious education, in the provision of sex education or in other elements of the curriculum. In the science curriculum, for example, schools impart knowledge to young people about drugs and other factors that can be damaging to their health. There are lessons that young people must learn about avoiding peer-group pressure and about avoiding substances that can be harmful to them. In all those ways, schools have a vital role to play. I hope that we are giving them the guidance, material and mechanisms with which to play those roles. However, yet again, if parents are not co-operative, not prepared to allow their children to receive that guidance in schools and not prepared to give teachers the backing that they need when they are trying their best to give young people that guidance, it is difficult to see what else can be done.

The hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) made some revealing remarks, at which I shall look carefully. They gave us some interesting hints about his party's

[Mr. Forth]

attitude to certain elements of education, although there was some confusion in what he said. He gave credit to Sir Ron Dearing—I am grateful for that—for squaring up to the real problems that had emerged in the curriculum and in the testing regime a year ago, for coming forward with imaginative solutions and for providing something that could be widely welcomed and accepted, both by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and throughout education.

Having said all that, the hon. Member for Bridgend drew back somewhat, as a representative of, or adviser to, the National Union of Teachers, from condemning the NUT roundly in its desire, alone among the teachers' unions, to continue to threaten the disruption of education and of testing this year, even against the background of the progress that has been made thanks to the work of Sir Ron Dearing. I found that confusing.

Mr. Win Griffiths: I make it clear that the NUT whole-heartedly takes up the changes proposed in the Dearing review and wants them to be a success. I pointed out that the NUT had balloted its members who said that overall, they were not prepared to undertake this year's tests, but that they were prepared to take on the tests that were the outcome of the Dearing review. For my own part, I believe that all schools should look at the tests for this year and, if it is the wish of the staff, they should take them.

Mr. Forth: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Bridgend. That is a helpful comment which, again, we shall wish to look at and consider; it may move us forward. I hope that the NUT will look carefully at the hon. Gentleman's words given his shadow responsibility for education; that may well be helpful.

It was regrettable that the hon. Member for Bridgend went on to imply that one of the ways in which he would fund his as yet unspecified commitment to nursery education would be by abolishing the assisted places scheme, which plays an important role in education and which allows access to excellent education for young people and parents who would not otherwise receive it. It is regrettable that the Labour party is prepared to be so destructive of something that has proved to be of such value and so popular among parents to fund an unspecified commitment to nursery education. The hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) reckoned that the commitment fell far below anything to which he and his party aspired. However, I leave that matter for the hon. Gentlemen to sort out between themselves.

In a superb speech, my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby brought to light a worrying discrepancy. Ofsted, the independent inspectorate, pointed out the excellent steps taken by so many schools to provide quality collective worship and religious education. On the other hand, there were the bizarre comments made recently by the National Association of Head Teachers. The general secretary of the NAHT said that it was somehow impossible to provide a daily act of worship in primary schools. That simply will not do and it illustrates a worrying trend among some teachers' unions and their general secretaries. They are prepared to come out with negative, unhelpful and destructive comments when so many of their members—in this case, head teachers—are working so hard to meet the demanding challenges set by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and to do what the law now requires. I hope that the House agrees that that is a matter of some regret.

Overall, the debate has been positive. It has highlighted a number of concerns, but it has also given us the opportunity to see the way forward in so many ways in the vital area of providing the correct value and moral framework within which our education must proceed. I am grateful to my right hon. and hon. Friends who have participated in and sat through the debate in such large numbers. I share the regret expressed by some of my hon. Friends that so few Opposition Members took the trouble even to attend the debate and that so few participated in it.

6.58 pm

Sir Michael Neubert: This has been a lively and spirited debate. Having listened to every word of it, I thank all right hon. and hon. Members who have taken part. In particular, I thank my right hon. and hon. Friends who have contributed either by their speeches, by their interventions or just by their attendance and vocal support. It has been an interesting occasion. It has brought forward one or two developments and has revealed, especially in relation to the post-Easter conference position of the National Union of Teachers on testing, some new prospects of progress, which I hope may be achieved. I hope that, overall, we have served the interests of the next generation by debating these important issues today.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House, recognising one generation's responsibility for the next and the critical importance of young people's development to a stable, healthy and well-ordered society, calls on the Government to continue to encourage a wide diversity of choice in schooling, greater priority for the needs of children within the family and resistance to harmful influences to which they are exposed in the media and elsewhere.

Travellers' Allowances

6.59 pm

The Paymaster General (Sir John Cope): I beg to move,

That the Travellers' Allowances Order 1994 (S.I., 1994, No. 955), a copy of which was laid before this House on 29th March, be approved.

The order applies to duty-free goods for travellers arriving from outside the European Union. I hasten to make clear straight away that it does not apply to cross-border shopping in other European Community countries for tax-paid goods, or to purchases made in duty-free shops on journeys in the European Community.

The order does a number of things, but most importantly it implements the increase in what is known as the other goods allowance for travellers arriving in the United Kingdom from outside the Community. That allowance is for goods other than tobacco, alcohol and perfumes, for which specific and unchanged quantity limits exist. The increase in the other goods allowance from £36 to £136 was set in train by the United Kingdom during our presidency of the Community and was agreed eventually by member states at the Economic and Finance Council on 25 October 1993 to come into force on 1 January 1994.

There was a need for the European Parliament to be consulted and, as a result, the necessary European Community legislation did not go through fully until March. Therefore, Customs and Excise introduced the increase by extra-statutory class concession on 1 January 1994, so that travellers could benefit as soon as possible from the extra allowance in anticipation of the Community legislation.

We are also taking the opportunity to simplify allowances for the crews of ships and aircraft by bringing them into line with those of travellers. We are also correcting a few small anomalies in the application of the allowances, which in fact go back to before the United Kingdom's entry into the European Community. Those will finally bring us fully into line with European Community law, but will marginally restrict the relief.

In the first place, we are withdrawing relief from payment of duty and tax on part of an item with a value exceeding the allowance, or an item that pushes a group of items over the limit. We are also disallowing groups of people from aggregating their allowances to obtain relief on a single item of a value exceeding an individual allowance. I do not think that those changes will have a large impact because, of course, there is a large increase in the allowance itself—from £36 to £136—which will supersede that impact. In contrast, all travellers will benefit from the increased allowance.

The order also withdraws the entitlement to allowances from the crews of vessels and other travellers who do not land anywhere outside the European Community during the course of their journey. That will affect only a small number, such as the crews of some fishing vessels; those who visit a country outside the Community will, as I have said, benefit from the full travellers' allowances, with an increased alcohol allowance, as well as a significant increase in the other goods allowance. We have also taken the opportunity to consolidate the legislation on such matters. If one consults the order in detail, it is apparent that we are repealing no fewer than 11 orders, which were passed over a period of 25 years, and replacing it with the single order.

No doubt hon. Members will have noticed the note on the Order Paper to the effect that the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments had not yet completed its consideration of the instrument at the time when it was put on the Order Paper. The Committee sought clarification of the explanatory note to the order, which mentioned travellers who land outside the European Community. It should, of course, have mentioned those who have travelled from outside the Community. There may be some who were born outside the EC and come here for the first time and therefore cannot be regarded as landing outside the EC and then returning.

That point made by the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments is obviously correct. We shall amend the explanatory note by means of a correction slip. When it is reprinted, if that should be required, we shall amend it in the text. That does not affect the order, which is, of course, drafted correctly as intended and as I have just described.

7.4 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): The note on the Order Paper states that the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments has not yet completed consideration of the statutory instrument. Since 1987, and between 1979 and 1983, the person who almost always got up in the Chamber to draw attention to the fact that the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments or the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments had not considered such orders was the late Bob Cryer.

A large number of hon. Members have paid tribute to Bob Cryer as an active hon. Member in the Chamber and a man of very strong principles and have paid tribute to the way in which he worked for his constituents, but few people have paid tribute to the way in which he worked ceaselessly as a member of the Select Committee and the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. He was a member of those Committees for 13 years, 11 years as Chairman. He was always in the Chamber to draw to the attention of the House the fact that statutory instruments such as the one before us had not gone through the scrutiny process completely. Although it is a technical point and the Minister has cleared up the point that concerned the Committee, it would be remiss of me or any Committee member not to put on record on behalf of those of us who serve on the Committee our appreciation of the friendship and diligence that he demonstrated both in Committee and in reporting its concerns to the House.

Therefore, I hope that the House will place on record its debt to Bob Cryer, a parliamentarian with extreme concerns that he expressed not only in the Chamber, but in Committee where he worked extremely hard.

7.7 pm

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): May I begin by strongly endorsing the warm tribute that my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) has paid to Bob Cryer—his work, his diligence and his energy in dealing with statutory instruments, as in other areas to which he brought his marvellous skills as a parliamentarian which we all greatly admired and so greatly miss. I thank my hon. Friend for paying that tribute, which I am sure is shared by all hon. Members.

[Mr. Andrew Smith]

The order is pretty uncontentious. I have neither received any hostile comment, nor seen any hostile comment in the press. As the Paymaster General has said, it increases duty-free allowances for excise and VAT purposes for travellers arriving from outside the EC to £136 from £36. The increase in allowances is welcome and, indeed, overdue. If anything, it is a pity that the allowances are not a little higher. I also note the extension of full allowances to aircraft and ship crews, which I dare say will be welcomed by those able to take advantage of them.

I have some questions and comments to put to the Paymaster General on the main change made by the order, which turns on the other goods allowance. First, what was the reason behind the withdrawal of the previously available offsetting facility to which he referred, which allowed relief on part of a more costly item? Does the withdrawal mean that someone arriving in the United Kingdom from outside the European Union with, for example, a camera costing more than £136—his only overseas purchase—would have no duty-free allowance? That seems to be the implication to be drawn from the order. That does not seem very fair.

Secondly, we are to see the ending of the practice of aggregation whereby family groups could pool their allowances against a single more expensive item. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will explain why the practice is to be brought to an end. He said that he did not think that it would cause too much difficulty because the level of the allowance is to be increased. He did not, however, provide any justification for the ending of the aggregation. Surely it is a facility which should be kept rather than dispensed with.

Thirdly, I take up the news release issued by Customs and Excise on 6 April, in which it is explained that the crews of a relatively few vessels—mainly Royal Navy and fishing boats, but also other travellers such as rig workers, who do not land anywhere outside the EC—will no longer be entitled to travellers' allowances. I hope that the Paymaster General will explain exactly who will be affected by this provision and why the present conditions have been changed.

The news release tells us that the changes will affect only a few vessels and other travellers. Bearing in mind that the new provisions bear on travellers working in hazardous occupations, it seems rather petty to take away a small but no doubt welcome compensation in the form of allowances.

Fourthly, the news release states:

"The practice of allowing an additional two litres of still table wine as an alternative to one litre of spirits or liqueurs over 22 per cent. volume or two litres of fortified sparkling wine or other liqueurs is withdrawn."

Is that not rather petty and somewhat ridiculous, given the millions of litres of still table wine now entering Britain, with low or no duty paid, from within the European Community? What is the justification for the change?

Fifthly, what steps are being taken by Customs and Excise, and carriers, to advise travellers of their allowances and prospective rates of duty when they are making their outward journeys from the United Kingdom? After all, one of the pleasures of overseas travel is the opportunity to shop for different goods at different prices from those generally available here. It would be a good idea to advise people in advance about the rules and duties applicable on their return. Perhaps a leaflet should be printed setting out some examples. I am sure that the Paymaster General will let me know whether such advice is being made available and, if not, whether it could be encouraged.

Sixthly and finally, I cannot help noting that under the terms of the European agreement, from which the order originates, Germany was able to retain its existing limits for visitors entering from Poland and the Czech Republic. That would seem to contradict the principle of a common European policy. It will raise interesting issues if and when Austria and Finland join the European Community. I dare say that similar pressures will arise from the attraction of cross-border shopping elsewhere in central and eastern Europe.

The German Government's achievement in getting some measure of protection against the attractions of cross-border shopping on Germany's external European Union frontier stands in interesting contrast with Britain's inability to do anything about the haemorrhage of business in drink and cigarette sales from the United Kingdom to France on our internal European Union frontier. I know, as the Paymaster General stressed, that that has nothing to do with the order, but it is worth drawing attention to the German Government's success in securing a measure of protection on their external frontier.

I do not understand why people crossing from Poland to Germany should be subject to different rules from those that apply to people crossing from Croatia into Italy or from Bulgaria into Greece. I shall be grateful if the Paymaster General explains why the German exception is justified.

The Opposition do not intend to oppose the order. However, as I have said, I shall be grateful if the Paymaster General chooses to respond to my questions.

7.15 pm

Sir John Cope: First, I add to the tribute that the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) paid to Bob Cryer, our former colleague. I knew Bob Cryer for a long time. From my experience at the Dispatch Box and in other capacities—I was in the Government Whips Office for many years, for example—I am aware of the excellent work that he did for the House, especially in the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments. I know from practical experience how difficult it is to find Members prepared to serve in some of the more complex areas of legislation and to undertake the difficult and detailed work involved in dealing with abstruse orders—especially in the context of European legislation—which come before us. There is no better example of someone who did that than Bob Cryer.

As the House will know, Bob Cryer was one of my predecessors for he was a Minister with responsibility for small firms. He was keen on steam trains and closely connected with the Keighley-Worth valley railway. All those interests endeared him to me, even if occasionally he made life a bit difficult or expressed opinions with which I did not agree.

The hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) asked several questions. He suggested, in what I am sure was a slip of the tongue, that there were increases in the excise allowances as well as in value added tax allowances. In

fact, for ordinary travellers we have consolidated the excise allowances, but not increased them. It is the other goods that are affected by the main change set out in the order.

The hon. Member for Oxford, East said that the order was overdue. I entirely agree with him. We have been negotiating for some time to bring the order forward. The hon. Gentleman drew attention, perhaps inadvertently, to one of the reasons why it has taken so long to introduce the order. He talked about the problem that Germany has had with goods sold tax free for export finding their way back across the eastern border for sale in German markets. Eventually, the only way to resolve the problem was to agree to the derogation to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

The allowances are to be reviewed again in 1995. The hon. Member for Oxford, East said that they should have been a bit higher. We wanted them to be higher, and so did some other countries, but these matters are best agreed upon with the Community. The order reflects the agreement that we were eventually able to negotiate.

The hon. Gentleman asked about some of the small changes being made and gave the example of a camera. He is correct in his appreciation of the effect on travellers in the position that he described. He drew attention to aggregation and to the fact that crews of vessels that do not land anywhere outside the Community, though they may be at sea in international waters, will have their allowances withdrawn. The three points relate to the original European Community legislation, which was agreed before the United Kingdom became a member of the Community. It is right to come into line with that legislation by taking advantage of the opportunity presented to us. The offsetting and aggregation are matters of judgment. Is it better to have a rather higher allowance and no aggregation or to permit aggregation and have a lower allowance? That is a matter of judgment and I am prepared to agree to the system as it has existed in most Community countries, even before we joined.

With regard to vessels that do not land anywhere else, the provision applies to passengers—if any—of such vessels. There have been difficult cases of vessels that sailed outside territorial waters and passengers who had shopped for commodities then returned and avoided the duty on those goods. That is clearly not a practice which we would want to encourage, as it is a means of avoidance. We would not wish to set up arrangements that could promote such a possibility.

The hon. Member for Oxford, East asked how that change was being promulgated, particularly by the carriers and by Customs and Excise, for departing passengers. Posters, leaflets and official notices are available and are being distributed in departure lounges so that people can understand the position, if they wish to, before they leave for their holiday or their overseas visit. They will therefore be aware of the position when they return.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Travellers' Allowances Order 1994 (S.I., 1994, No. 955), a copy of which was laid before this House on 29th March, be approved.

HMSO Trading Fund

7.21 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. David Davis): I beg to move,

That the draft HMSO Trading Fund (Amendment) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 13th April, be approved.

This order is essentially a technical accounting measure. It seeks to bring within the scope of the trading fund HMSO's growing business with public bodies overseas, chiefly in Europe, so that it can be handled in a more businesslike way. This overseas trading has hitherto been carried out on a token vote with the approval of the House. A token vote is a nominal sum, in this case £1,000, which allows much larger cash flows of income and expenditure to balance out over the accounting year.

The original trading fund order of 1980 did not envisage HMSO trading with customers based outside the United Kingdom. HMSO did, and still does, service overseas units of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Defence and so on. HMSO's ambition to extend its customer base beyond the United Kingdom was approved by the House in 1991 when it authorised a new token vote to cover exploration of public sector markets overseas. The token nature of the vote meant that income and expenditure were required to balance out over the year so that there was no substantive effect on public expenditure.

The growth of HMSO's European business is now placing severe strain on the vote accounting arrangements. The requirement for income and expenditure to balance out over the year makes no provision for the working capital that is essential in any business. The time has now come to transfer the business from vote accounting to trading fund so that it can be handled in a more normal and businesslike way.

The order will permit HMSO to continue to develop its trading with public sector bodies in Europe and elsewhere on a businesslike basis. That will benefit British industry and the British taxpayer. En passant, by a strange coincidence of geography, the order will have a mildly beneficial effect on employment prospects in the constituencies of the hon. Members for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) and Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett). However, it is not primarily for that reason that I commend the order to the House.

7.23 pm

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): I have a strong constituency interest in the order because the largest single unit of HMSO is in my constituency and is a greatly valued contributor to the economy of the city of Norwich.

As the Minister said, the order enables HMSO to take greater advantage of its printing expertise and, by widening its ambit, to cover the public sector in the European Union and elsewhere overseas. As the Minister said, the Government Trading Funds Act 1973, which governs the financial arrangements of HMSO, excludes trading in areas that have not previously been financed by a vote under the supply procedure. This remedial measure corrects that anomaly.

To its credit, HMSO has already secured business from the French department of employment and the German post office. It has the capacity in its new state-of-the-art

[Mr. John Garrett]

passport assembly line to secure much more business in Europe. The order will enable HMSO to finance such business.

By any standards, HMSO has been an outstanding success since it gained trading fund status. The Treasury attempted to cripple it at birth, of course, by saddling it with a £50 million originating debt and a £20 million long-term loan. However, it has largely paid off the debt and now has a turnover of £400 million with sales per employee at a record £126,000 in 1993 and a current cost operating surplus in that year of more than £10 million. A profit of £22 million is planned for 1996. It has very high levels of achievement in customer satisfaction with very high service levels in print and publications deliveries.

However, it is far from clear why the order should be brought forward at this time, useful though it is.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Why does the *Official Report* cost £7.50? That is a tremendous sum of money. My hon. Friend has referred to HMSO's substantial profits, yet all the parliamentary publications are very expensive. Can my hon. Friend, or the Minister if he gets a chance, shed any light on that?

Mr. Garrett: I assume that it is predatory pricing. As so many institutions, such as universities and public libraries, have to take *Hansard* and Government publications, I guess that HMSO follows the Government's request for it to be profitable. It certainly puts profit before the provision of subsidised literature for the public. The Minister helps to set those objectives and no doubt he will satisfy my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). My hon. Friend has made a very good point.

As I was saying, I cannot see why the order, useful though it is, has been brought forward at this time, because, at a time when HMSO is thriving, hanging over it is nothing less than a threat to its existence. I refer to the accountants' report on the commercialisation of HMSO —the so-called prior options report. I am told that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster now has that report. That makes it even more odd that the order should be introduced before the report has been published.

I understand that the report sets out a number of options for the future of HMSO. It is feared in HMSO—for very good reasons—that there will be 1,000 redundancies in the next five years amounting to no less than one third of the staff. The Minister might give us some idea whether that fear has foundation; or does he intend to make his announcement in the summer recess, which is a typical shelter for bad news?

If HMSO is to be substantially damaged by the accountants' report, it would be another case of administrative vandalism by this Government. It is not clear why such a study was commissioned from commercial accountants—a practice rather different from prior options studies in other agencies—and particularly from commercial accountants who are unlikely to grasp the sensitivity of the security of parliamentary printing by HMSO.

I cannot see any reason to change the trading fund arrangements under which HMSO has been so successful. If a further distancing from Treasury restrictions is necessary, a sensible arrangement could be to establish HMSO as a wholly-owned Government corporation. HMSO needs less messing about, particularly by market testing.

It is interesting that the Government follow two contradictory policies at the same time. One is to establish agencies under the control of fully accountable and fully responsible chief executives. I see that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the head of the civil service now try to make a distinction between accountability and responsibility, but it is one that will not bear scrutiny.

We have a chief executive of an agency such as HMSO being told to run the show as best he might and to the best of his ability and then he is told that he must market test or contractualise on a piecemeal basis many of the agency's activities for which he is supposed to be responsible. That is a direct conflict. Of course, it is the reason why Sir Peter Kemp was fired—he had a row with the Government's efficiency adviser. The Government's efficiency adviser was keen on contracting out and Sir Peter Kemp was keen on setting up agencies. The two were in conflict, so Sir Peter Kemp, a distinguished public servant, got the bullet.

The record of HMSO in market testing has been excellent, for example, in retaining the highly efficient Bristol distribution centre and the Basildon reprographic unit.

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): Hear, hear.

Mr. Garrett: I do not know why the hon. Gentleman should say, "Hear, hear" when he is in favour of privatising HMSO. Shall I give way to him? I heard the hon. Gentleman applauding the efficiency of HMSO, but he is a supporter of privatisation.

Mr. Waterson: To clarify the position, I was saying, "Hear, hear" to the hon. Gentleman's use of the word "Basildon".

Mr. Garrett: That is forgivable because I am sure that we all react—

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I hope that the hon. Gentleman will withdraw.

Mr. Garrett: I withdraw any aspersion that I may have cast on the hon. Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson). I am happy to give way if he wants to make public his position on the privatisation, commercialisation and market testing of HMSO.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: I was listening to the hon. Gentleman's speech.

Mr. Garrett: Once again, the hon. Gentleman cannot make up his mind.

As I said, HMSO has retained some important functions. The Government rule is that every market-tested activity must be market tested again in three years' time. That leads to management and staff who are in constant turmoil because they are always having to bid for their jobs or resist some hostile takeover. We know that after a short time a contractor who has secured and won a market test soon finds ways of putting up the price or gouging the client in some way.

Market testing is nothing new to HMSO—75 per cent. of its goods and services are already purchased from the private sector. HMSO has an exceptional reputation as a

reputable supplier to the public sector and has regularly exceeded the financial targets set for it. It has reduced its staff by some 200, mainly through early retirement.

The staff are in the dark about the future of this successful organisation. In a poll of the staff, 86 per cent. wanted to know what the prior options study team was doing because they had never been told since it was set up. Privatisation had the support of a mere 6 per cent. of the staff. A future private bidder should bear in mind the staff attitude to outside control or ownership of HMSO, as should Tory politicians in the City and the country.

HMSO's years of operating as a trading fund have produced an innovative, go-ahead and commercial organisation. It has a bright future which should not be jeopardised by political dogma. However, until we hear what the future of HMSO is, I welcome this modest measure which will enable it to expand its overseas trading.

7.33 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I shall detain the House for a few moments to say a few words about the cost of Government publications and the effect of that—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The hon. Gentleman will be out of order because that matter is outside the scope of the debate.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am looking at the explanatory note. I quote precisely what it says:

"The additional operations now to be financed by the fund are the procurement and production of printing and supply of stationery and office machinery and related services and the publication and sale of material in printed or other form for such bodies outside the United Kingdom as are of a like nature to those for which the HMSO Trading Fund already provides goods and services."

What I am about to say should fall broadly within the area that is identified in that part of the explanatory memorandum. I am dealing specifically with the cost of—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must relate his remarks to overseas matters.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: That is possible. The publication in my hand is available not only in the United Kingdom but overseas. Indeed, I imagine that under the present arrangements, if someone overseas wishes to purchase the publication which I am holding, which is a copy of the *Official Report* of last Friday's parliamentary debates, they would have to find a sympathetic Member of the United Kingdom Parliament and ask him to send it to them through the post, or, alternatively, they would have to subscribe directly to HMSO in London and thereby receive a copy of it.

I am interested in the costs that such people might be required to pay wherever they are within the European Community. I am especially interested in the fact that a high price for a publication of this nature effectively restricts—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but he is out of order. Unless he can stick to the order under debate, he must take his seat.

7.35 pm

Mr. David Davis: With the permission of the House, I shall start as best I can by staying in order and by answering the question of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) about the cost of HMSO publications. As I am sure he already knows, for many years the price of the *Official Report* was heavily subsidised. In 1983, when the subsidy stood at £6 million, the Government decided progressively to reduce the level of subsidy. HMSO is currently having a MORI survey carried out to see whether a reduction in the cost of the *Official Report* would lead to more purchases of it. I hope that that is of some help to the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) started by paying a well-earned tribute to the operation of HMSO. There is no doubt in my mind that HMSO earned that tribute. The hon. Gentleman asked me why the order has been introduced now. The trade in Europe—certainly abroad—that is carried out by HMSO has grown in a few years from about £6,000 to nearly £500,000. As the hon. Gentleman, given his background, will appreciate, that creates a significant operating capital requirement which is difficult to meet within the remit of the current vote arrangements.

The order allows, frankly in the simplest way possible, HMSO to handle overseas trade in a more businesslike way. Of course, that brings benefits to HMSO, to the Norwich, South constituency and to the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson).

Mr. Patrick Thompson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way because it gives me an opportunity to say that, like the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett), I welcome the order. May I take this opportunity to pay a tribute to the work of HMSO—*[Interruption.]* If I may be positive, unlike the hon. Gentleman, who seems to be negative all the time, I welcome the important work done by HMSO and by many of my constituents in Norwich, North in HMSO. I have had the opportunity to visit HMSO on a number of occasions. I should like to make this positive statement about the work that is done in Norwich by this excellent organisation.

Mr. Davis: My hon. Friend makes his case very well, as I would expect from an excellent constituency Member of Parliament.

In addition to the benefits to the direct areas, there are also benefits to British industry. Some 80 per cent. of the sales abroad come from British suppliers. The hon. Member for Norwich, South referred to the success of HMSO in market testing. He is absolutely right. HMSO has a market testing programme which has saved it about £2.4 million—well over 20 per cent.—on what it addressed. Contrary to the hon. Gentleman's comments, those savings led to no compulsory redundancies. Obviously there will be retirements and redundancies, but they are not compulsory, and that is beneficial.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the commercialisation study. The consultants' report which we have just received is extremely complex and refers to 18 different components of HMSO. It will take some time to study it, and I cannot at this point forecast when we will come to a conclusion on it. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not want us to rush it, particularly since we—as much as

[Mr. Davis]

he—place great importance on maintaining the high standard of service to the House. The public availability of official information will, of course, be safeguarded.

I commend the order to House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft HMSO Trading Fund (Amendment) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 13th April, be approved.

CONSOLIDATION, &C., BILLS

Ordered,

That Mr. Richard Tracey be discharged from the Select Committee to join with the Committee appointed by the Lords as the Joint Committee on Consolidation, &c., Bills and Mr. Michael Bates be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

EMPLOYMENT

Ordered,

That Ms Angela Eagle be added to the Employment Committee.—*[Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Alex Vaill

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

7.40 pm

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): I am grateful for the opportunity to have this debate. It is a particular pleasure that the Minister of State will answer the debate, as, by a strange quirk of fate, he answered the debate in which I made my maiden speech a couple of years ago when he was in a previous incarnation.

As Members of the House, we are all used to holding regular surgeries. We deal with a variety of problems for our constituents; some serious, some less so. But in my two years as a Member of Parliament, I have not had such a depressing interview as that which took place in my surgery earlier this year.

I received a visit from Mr. and Mrs. Vaill, the father and stepmother of Alex Vaill. They told me of his tragic and early death. Alex was 23 when he died, and was much loved by his family. He enjoyed all types of sport including tennis, football and cricket. He excelled at school, and went on to read mathematics at Durham university. He was studying for his exams as an actuary when he was killed. He was due to get engaged.

In short, he was a talented, hard-working and responsible young man with his whole life stretching before him. Then, tragedy struck. On Friday 9 April last year, which happened to be Good Friday, Alex had been out for a couple of beers with a friend in Sutton, where he lived at that time. They left a pub in Sutton High street and dropped into a nearby McDonalds to buy some takeaway food.

Further down the street, they were accosted by a man called Graham Langley. He had obviously been drinking, and demanded that Alex Vaill give him one of his chips. This demand was politely declined, but that was not enough for Langley. Three eye-witnesses agreed that he was spoiling for some sort of incident. Alex and his friend began to walk away, and they were followed by shouted insults from Langley. He then attacked Alex and his friend, punching both of them to the ground.

Alex's skull was fractured and he was rushed to hospital. Four days later, he died peacefully after his family had agreed to turn off his life-support machine when doctors told them that there was no hope of his recovering. A young and blameless life had been snuffed out.

What of Alex's attacker? The contrast could not have been greater. Langley had a string of previous convictions, a number of them for violence. I understand that he was out of prison on licence at the time of this attack. Both in and outside prison, he was a keen body-builder and, as a result, is very powerfully built. People who have known him over the years in Sutton have contacted me to talk of his viciousness from an early age. You might ask yourself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what he was doing roaming our streets at all.

I cannot do much better than to quote from Langley's own defence counsel, who said:

"Mr. Vaill in his short life was a better man than the defendant has ever been or was ever likely to be."

I think that we can agree with that sentiment.

Langley was duly charged with the murder of Alex Vaill, and with inflicting grievous bodily harm on his companion. That seemed to be the appropriate charge. In

the ordinary way, one would have expected the imposition of a life sentence, although I shall have more to say about the effect of that later.

However, this was not to be. In due course, the Crown Prosecution Service accepted a guilty plea to the lesser offence of manslaughter. On Friday 25 February this year, Langley was sentenced at the Old Bailey to five years in prison. My understanding is that he is likely to serve only 30 months and, as he has been held in custody since April 1993, we may expect his return to our streets in September 1995.

There have been other recent cases that have raised this sort of issue. One will recall in particular the case of Jonathan Roberts, where a shoplifter killed his pursuer. My hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) has asked me to associate him with my remarks this evening.

I need hardly dwell on the effect of all this on Alex's family. In Alex's father's words,

"the effect on our lives has been devastating. We are ordinary people, yet Alex was special."

He is sorely missed by his father, mother, stepmother, brother and sister. In short, the lives of his family and friends will never be the same again. Nor is this simply because of the natural process of grieving. They are also outraged and uncomprehending at the lightness of the sentence on Alex's killer.

The case raises a number of important questions about the workings of the criminal justice system. The first is whether the system of releasing prisoners on licence is being operated properly. Langley had a long record of violence and I should be interested to know what signs of remorse or of a change of character he showed which were sufficient to justify his release on licence. I am sure that the Minister will realise that if Langley had finished his full term, Alex Vaill would still be alive today. Recently, we saw that a number of convicted killers who were released from jail have gone on to commit 72 murders in this country in the past 30 years.

The second major question is the extent to which plea bargaining in such serious cases should be encouraged or permitted. The third question is the appropriateness of the sentence itself.

One of the first things that I did when I was made aware of this tragic case was to contact the Attorney-General to see whether there was any prospect of appealing against the sentence. The House will be aware that this Government introduced the possibility of the prosecution appealing against over-lenient sentences.

The matter was duly considered by my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General, who duly wrote to me on 29 March this year. He said:

"It would only be in the most exceptional cases that it could be proved beyond reasonable doubt that in throwing a single punch the defendant intended to kill or cause really serious harm."

Pausing there, it is interesting that an intent to cause "really serious harm" could be enough. In the event, Langley was sentenced also to two years to run concurrently for causing grievous bodily harm to Mr. Vaill's companion. I wonder whether this should have been a factor. The Minister may be able to enlighten me on that aspect also.

The Solicitor-General went on to say:

"A prosecution can only continue if there is a realistic prospect of conviction. There was no realistic prospect of convicting Langley of murder."

My hon. and learned Friend went on to talk about the advice of senior lawyers involved in criminal law, and said that the Criminal Justice Act 1988 gives the Attorney-General the power, in certain cases, to appeal against over-lenient sentences.

He concluded:

"After very careful consideration, and in the light of the guidance given by the Court of Appeal for offences of this kind, I am unable to say that the sentence was so lenient that it fell outside the range of sentence available to the judge."

Subject to anything that my hon. Friend might say, it seems that I must accept the judgment of those more practised than myself in criminal law that it was appropriate to accept the plea of manslaughter.

The Solicitor-General went on to refer to the power under the Criminal Justice Act 1988 and reached the conclusion that I have quoted. That was obviously a considerable disappointment both to me and to the Vaill family.

As I understand the position, what we are talking about is the so-called tariff for a particular crime. The Court of Appeal lays down guidelines for sentences appropriate for crimes based on their seriousness. A glance at Thomas's "Current Sentencing Practice" is informative. While it points out that the maximum sentence for involuntary manslaughter is life imprisonment, it sets out several cases similar to the Vaill case in which sentences range from seven years down to 12 months. On that basis, one has to accept that the sentence on Langley was well within the tariff range. But the question then arises whether the current tariff is appropriate.

I am told that one of the difficulties is that so-called life sentences nowadays mean an average of only 12 years incarceration. One can readily see the problem. The whole range of sentences is pushed downwards as a result. My hon. Friend the Minister knows my view that capital punishment should be reintroduced in certain circumstances. That is not the issue this evening. However, I believe that there is a growing case for making a life sentence mean what it says. That, in turn, would allow the range of lesser sentences for lesser offences to be pulled generally upwards.

Perhaps the truth is that we need to review our attitude to punishment. In the case of Regina *v.* Sargeant in 1974, the Court of Appeal laid down four principles to be applied in sentencing: retribution, deterrence, prevention and rehabilitation.

Deterrence is naturally an important factor in any punishment. It is designed not only to deter the offender in future but to be an example to others who might be similarly tempted. Prevention must also be important so that the punishment can assist in protecting the public. At its simplest, locking away a persistently violent offender will at least ensure that he commits no further offence while inside.

I shall not dwell in detail on rehabilitation. In a sense, some of our problems stem from an over-emphasis on that aspect of punishment in recent years. Retribution is not simply a repetition of the old lex talionis, "An eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth". It means that the punishment should be proportionate to the harm done. The historical basis is the replacement of the self-help system in primitive societies, for example the vendetta, by systems of state-administered justice. In other words, the state can rely on the support of its citizens for its criminal justice system only if it imposes sentences that take account of the natural desire of those citizens for retribution.

[Mr. Nigel Waterson]

An extreme example of a case that cried out for the highest penalty was the moors murders. As Lord Justice Denning, as he then was, said in 1953:

"The punishment inflicted for grave crimes should adequately reflect the revulsion felt by the great majority of citizens for them. It is a mistake to consider the objects of punishment as being deterrent or reformative or preventive and nothing else . . . the ultimate justification of any punishment is not that it is a deterrent, but that it is the emphatic denunciation by the community of a crime".

Another quotation is from Justice Cardozo in his "Selected Writings". He said:

"The thirst for vengeance is a very real, even if it be a hideous thing; and states may not ignore it until humanity has been raised to greater heights than any that have yet been scaled in all the long ages of struggle and ascent".

Whatever the reasons for it, I have little doubt that the sentence of five years for the unprovoked killing of Alex Vaill is inadequate. Nothing will persuade me to the contrary. There is something rotten in the state of British justice when sentences of this absurd leniency are meted out by judges for the crime of snuffing out innocent life. There is a natural sense of outrage felt by individual citizens when they read of such cases. For them, justice has not been seen to be done.

The Government have rightly pledged themselves to redress the balance of the scales of justice away from the criminal back towards the victim. Patently, in cases like this, we have not yet fully succeeded. We must give judges the powers that they need so that tough sentences are seen to be the norm for vicious acts of extreme violence. Society needs to know that the punishment will fit the crime, and when a life sentence is imposed, it must mean exactly what it says. I fear that if we do not tackle these serious issues soon, the support of the ordinary citizens of Britain for the law will ebb away.

7.54 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Maclean): I should like to start, if I may, by offering my condolences to Mr. Vaill's family. Nothing that I can say here will compensate for their tragic loss or for the suffering that they have endured. They have my deepest sympathy and, I am sure, that of every Member of the House. As my hon. Friend will appreciate, as a Minister of the Crown, I cannot comment on the decisions taken by the various parties involved in this case, or on the sentence passed by the court.

What I can attempt to do tonight is to explain the way in which the law works in homicide cases and to assure the House and those outside that the Government are determined to do what they can to ensure that those whose action leads to another's death are dealt with appropriately.

As my hon. Friend will know, under our law there are two distinct homicide offences—murder and manslaughter. Both offences cover actions that result in the unlawful death of another person. The purpose of having two separate offences is to cover different degrees of culpability. Murder is, in our view, a unique offence and it carries a mandatory life sentence as a result. My hon. Friend knows my view; I approve of capital punishment for those found guilty of murder.

The law requires that for a conviction for murder, there must be an intention to kill or to do serious bodily harm. That is a high threshold of intention, and rightly so. I can well understand the strength of feeling of those who have lost loved ones through the actions of another; where the action has been deliberately taken with the intention to kill or seriously injure, the perpetrator is rightly called a murderer and, in the absence of capital punishment, that murderer could spend many years or, indeed, the rest of his life in prison.

But many deaths are not legally murder and cannot be charged as such. If murder is not the appropriate offence, the law on manslaughter becomes relevant. There are two broad categories of manslaughter. The first covers cases where there was an intention to kill or do serious harm, but the culpability of the act is reduced on grounds of provocation or diminished responsibility. In such cases, a conviction for manslaughter is possible and the sentence is left entirely in the hands of the trial judge.

The second category covers cases in which death follows a person's actions, but there was no intention to kill or do serious harm. For a conviction of manslaughter within this category, it is necessary to prove that death is the result of an unlawful act which a reasonable person would think would put the victim at the risk of some harm —not necessarily serious harm—or it must be the result of an act of gross negligence.

Where a person commits an assault, without intending to kill or do serious bodily harm, and his victim dies as a result, it is clear in law that manslaughter, not murder, is the offence for which he is liable. I am sure that that is a sensible path for the law to tread. It is not that the law excuses assaults or undervalues the innocent victim's life. However, it would be impossible to justify treating as murder cases in which death was an unforeseen and, on any reasonable and objective view, an improbable consequence.

Taking that as a sensible starting point for the definition of the offence is not to imply that some manslaughter cases will not still involve a high degree of culpability on the defendant's part and deserve long custodial sentences. The loss of any life is always serious. It is simply that the unintended consequences of an unlawful act cannot be the only measure of seriousness. Indeed, as a matter of natural justice, they should not be the principal measure.

It is worth studying the matter from another perspective and considering an example. Let us take an example of a person luckily escaping a deliberate attempt on his or her life—the bullet just misses its target, or the assault occurs only minutes away from a major hospital, which saves the victim's life. That is still attempted murder and the perpetrator should not be treated with leniency as a result. Of course not. We are rightly concerned that the sentence should reflect the evil of what the perpetrator intended to do.

The same principle applies when the consequences of an unlawful act go far beyond their intention or a reasonably foreseeable outcome. The recent Scarlet case involved a licensee who pushed a drunk out of his pub. The drunk fell, cracked his head and died. The licensee had no intention of killing and nor could he reasonably foresee that a push would result in death. He was rightly not charged with murder.

The penalty passed by a court for manslaughter depends on a wide variety of circumstances. The maximum penalty, which reflects the seriousness of the worst cases, is life imprisonment, but there is no mandatory sentence and nor —quite properly—is there any certainty of imprisonment in every case. The courts will consider carefully the

circumstances of the case when deciding the right sentence. They should consider the defendant's intentions and what he could reasonably have foreseen, as well as the consequences of his actions.

I stress to my hon. Friend and to the House that sentencing in each case is entirely a matter for the courts, within the limits set by Parliament and the common law. It is not for me, any other Minister or the Executive. It is not the Government's business to comment on what the courts do in that respect. Clearly, it is important that sentencing is consistent and informed by a reasonable and defensible philosophy. The courts, including the Court of Appeal, over time have naturally established a range of precedents and guidelines for types of cases, attempting to apply just such a consistent approach.

Of course, the courts must be responsive to public opinion and, from time to time, their approach will change as a result. If we were seriously asking them to forgo a fundamental reliance on intention as a prime measure of seriousness, it would be a matter for Parliament to decide. We are not saying that, and nor did my hon. Friend intend to ask for it. The Government do not intend to make that sort of change.

We must recognise that judges are not infallible either. Where an unduly lenient sentence is passed in a serious case, we have provided a power—to which my hon. Friend referred—for the Attorney-General to refer the matter to the Court of Appeal. In such cases, that court may quash the original sentence and substitute a higher one. Many hon. Members will be aware of cases in which that power has been used to the satisfaction and reassurance of the public.

Whether to refer a case to the Court of Appeal is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General. He must take into account the guidance laid down by the Court of Appeal in similar cases. Only if he is able to conclude that the sentence is unduly lenient —that is, that it falls outside the range of sentences that a judge could reasonably consider appropriate in all the circumstances—can he apply for leave to refer the case to the Court of Appeal. My hon. Friend referred to that in his speech and rightly pointed out that my right hon. and learned Friend had concluded that the sentence was not outside that range of guidance.

There is a good deal of information, much of it recent, about the courts' attitude to manslaughter. Seven such cases have been referred to the Court of Appeal in England and Wales and one in Northern Ireland. In five cases, the sentences were increased, in two they remained the same and one case is outstanding.

However, it is not for the Executive to take over the Court of Appeal's role in establishing the proper levels of sentencing within a legal maximum. I listened carefully to what my hon. Friend said and believe that judges would be well advised to listen to his wise words and take more notice of public concern. People want to see justice done and they want the sentence to fit the crime.

Above all, the public agree with my hon. Friend and the Court of Appeal that every sentence should have an element of retribution, deterrence, prevention and rehabilitation. We can now enable the court to consider cases that would have been barred from going to it. The opportunities for the Court of Appeal to act as a regulating body have increased considerably as a result, to the benefit of the system.

Finally, my hon. Friend sought my views on several issues. First, he was concerned about the system for releasing prisoners on licence. I understand that Mr. Vaill's attacker had been released at the end of a previous sentence —not as a result of a decision to release him early—which had been passed before the Criminal Justice Act 1991 came into force. Since that Act, any person serving more than 12 months is required to undergo a period of supervision on release. They can also be required to serve the remainder of their original sentence in prison if they commit a further crime before it has expired. If they are sentenced to four years or more, their release can be delayed until the two thirds point of their sentence, if the parole board so decides. For prisoners serving seven years or more, that decision rests with the Home Secretary. Again, they are supervised on release until the three quarters point of sentence and the remainder can be reactivated in the event of further offending.

The Prison Service cannot detain a person beyond the authority that a sentence passed by the court confers, but the 1991 Act allows the court to pass a custodial sentence in a sexual or violent case purely on the basis that it is necessary for the protection of the public and, on the same ground, to pass a longer sentence than the seriousness of the offence requires.

My hon. Friend was also concerned about what he referred to as "plea bargaining". The Crown can properly accept a plea on the basis of the available evidence, thus sparing victims and witnesses the ordeal of a trial, but that is not plea bargaining and the Crown Prosecution Service will, as a matter of policy, prosecute the most serious offence that the evidence will support.

Finally, my hon. Friend mentioned Langley's simultaneous conviction for an assault on Mr. Vaill's companion. I can tell him that the charge in question did not require an intent to do grievous bodily harm, but only an intent to do some harm and that really serious injury resulted. The maximum penalty for such an offence is five years' imprisonment.

To sum up, we should not expect murder convictions every time a person is killed by an assault. That is not the law of Britain and we have no plans to make it such. Sentencing in manslaughter cases is quite properly a matter for the courts and the full range of punishments, up to life imprisonment, are available to them. The courts face difficult issues in cases of this kind and their judgments will inevitably be a source of disappointment to some people. No relatives who have lost a loved one can ever be satisfied, understandably, with the sentence on the attacker.

Taking those tough decisions, which we ask the courts to do, is a task for the courts alone, within the framework that Parliament and the common law provide. We have no plans to change that general situation.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nine minutes past Eight o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 26 April 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CROSSRAIL BILL

Motion made, and Question put,

That the Committee on the Crossrail Bill have leave to visit and inspect the site of the proposed works and areas affected by the proposed works, provided that no evidence shall be taken in the course of such visit and that any party who has made an appearance before the Committee be permitted to attend by his Counsel, Agent or other representative.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH

Industrial Diseases

1. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what national health service care is available for people with (a) asbestosis and (b) other industrial diseases.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): The national health service is a universal service. It provides quality health care for people of all ages who need it, regardless of how that need arises.

Mr. Loyden: Does the Minister accept that we are talking about terribly debilitating diseases that men and women have contracted in their places of work? It appears that the Department of Health has not done enough to improve the detection of asbestosis and related diseases. Is not it time that consultation took place between the Secretary of State for Health and the Secretary of State for Employment to see what improvements can be made in the early detection and treatment of such diseases?

Mr. Sackville: Mesothelioma and asbestosis of all kinds are a tragedy that will unfortunately affect many people who have come into contact with asbestos. The diseases are difficult to detect in advance, but we try to monitor the incidence closely to ensure that everything is done to avoid further contact and further contracting of the disease.

Accident and Emergency Sites, London

2. **Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list all accident and emergency sites that have been closed in London since 1988-89; and which sites she plans to close as she implements her policy of "Making London Better".

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): London is served by a dense network of accident and emergency departments. There are currently 40 A and E departments in the capital. No department will close until alternative cover is available and this will be the case before any changes arising out of "Making London Better" go ahead. I will write to the hon. Gentleman with the available information since 1988-89.

Mr. Austin-Walker: When will the Secretary of State stop deluding herself and attempting to deceive the public? Having confirmed in a recent answer that the number of accident and emergency sites has gone down by 17 per cent. since 1989, will she also admit that 9,000 beds have been lost in London in the past five years, that London now has fewer GPs and health visitors than it had three years ago, and that the number of people waiting for treatment in London has risen by 10 per cent. in the past year? Will she admit that, far from "making London better", her so-called reforms are making the health of London much worse?

Mrs. Bottomley: I would ask the hon. Gentleman to reflect a little on the need to rationalise health care in London. Before they became too populist, the Opposition supported investment in primary care. There can be no doubt that the £85 million going into primary care this year is essential. We need to strengthen our centres of excellence and our A and E departments. The hon. Gentleman seems to have overlooked in his catalogue of misery the £8.2 million that King's is spending on A and E, the £4.3 million that Lewisham is spending on A and E, the £3.2 million that St. Thomas's is spending on A and E, the £2 million that the Whittington is spending on A and E and the £1.1 million that the Homerton is spending on A and E. Those are all in areas represented by Labour Members who never praise the successes of the NHS or our investment in it.

Mr. Evennett: Does my right hon. Friend agree that better GP services will reduce the pressure on the accident and emergency departments? How much cash will her Department put into primary and community care in the coming year to improve the delivery of health care services to patients?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is aware that as many as 40 per cent. of the people who use accident and emergency departments in London could be helped either by minor injuries clinics or by better primary health care. That is why it is essential that we invest £85 million more in primary health care in London. It also matters to Londoners that there is a substantial investment in the London ambulance service, amounting to £14.8 million this year.

Mr. Blunkett: In justifying the fact that one in five A and E units have been closed, will the Secretary of State tell us how she justifies spending £150,000 of public money in the run-up to the local and Euro-elections on a

propaganda leaflet, "NHS Changes in London", which has been put into every household in London and is a straight piece of Tory party propaganda?

Mrs. Bottomley: That is an outrageous comment. Members of the hon. Gentleman's party will confirm that I was pressed by the Select Committee on why we had not taken more steps to explain to Londoners the need for change.

When we started on the process, the Labour party pretended to be a responsible party of opposition and supported the need for change. It is only as the elections have come closer that Labour Members have become so populist that now even their health spokesman is not prepared to speak in the debate on London's health services this week.

Domiciliary Care

3. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of current total expenditure by local authorities on domiciliary care; what was the figure in 1979; and if she will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. John Bowis): Gross expenditure by local authorities on domiciliary care in 1991-92 was £3,111 million. This is the latest figure available. In 1978-79, the figure was £611 million.

Lady Olga Maitland: I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend on those excellent figures. Does he agree that the elderly deserve the highest standards of care in their homes, and that they deserve flexibility, choice and respect for their dignity? Will he confirm that he will continue his drive to develop the community care policy programme, also paying attention to the residential care afforded by local authorities? In particular, will he condemn Labour-controlled Lambeth and Islington councils, which have an appalling record of abuse of the elderly and vulnerable in their care?

Mr. Bowis: My hon. Friend is quite right. The fact that we are spending 38 per cent. more in real terms on services for the elderly this year than we were four years ago shows that we are putting into practice our commitment to looking after the elderly in the community. My hon. Friend is also right to criticise some of those Labour London boroughs which seem incapable of doing the same. If Charles Dickens were around today, he would recognise the conditions in some parts of Labour London. He would not understand the nuclear-free zones, but he would understand the neglect, incompetence and misery that sum up Labour London.

Mr. Hinchliffe: But has not any expansion of domiciliary care been achieved largely thanks to the efforts of Labour-controlled councils which, unlike the Government, have a clear political commitment to developing alternatives to institutional care? If the Government believe in domiciliary care, why do not they drop the dogmatic requirement that councils spend the bulk of the care grant in the so-called independent sector? Directors of social services are telling me that that requirement is forcing people unnecessarily into expensive residential care placements. Why do not the Government put the needs of users and carers before Tory party dogma?

Mr. Bowis: I should have thought, after all this time, that the hon. Gentleman would at least understand that the transfer element in the special transitional grant relates to residential care which, before, was all spent in the independent sector. He should also recognise the considerable growth, shown by the figures that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland), in the domiciliary care provided by local authorities around the country. He should stand up and pay tribute to the councils and directors of social services who have made that possible—thanks to the resources given by this Government. Resourcing for social services, including community care, has increased from £3.6 billion to £6.4 billion in four years. That is what has made the growth possible, and the trend will continue under this Government.

Mr. Sims: But does not what my hon. Friend has just said completely contradict the Opposition's forecast that community care would not work because the resources would not be made available? Does my hon. Friend know of any local authority that has been unable to carry out the community care policy because of insufficient funds? Is not the truth of the matter that the policy is successful?

Mr. Bowis: All the surveys of community care undertaken since it came into being one year ago this month show that there has been steady progress throughout the country. None of the surveys has shown any problem over resourcing. The problems that have arisen have been due to dogma on the left of the political spectrum, which has stopped local authorities benefiting from the input of the independent sector into the care of people in need.

NHS Trusts

4. **Ms Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what new proposals she has regarding the public accountability of NHS trusts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: National health service trusts are fully accountable to me, through the NHS executive, for the delivery of health care and for the effective use of resources available to them. The new codes of conduct and accountability that I shall publish on 28 April will further strengthen trusts' accountability both to me and to the public. The codes will keep public service values at the heart of the operation and management of the NHS.

Ms Quin: Will the new rules allow community health councils to be represented on trust boards? Can the Secretary of State explain why my local community health council in Gateshead has for two years been denied access to the NHS trust and has even been denied observer status? Does she agree that that contradicts any idea of proper public accountability?

Mrs. Bottomley: I regret that the hon. Lady's community health council is perpetuating a party political vendetta against the establishment of the trust in the hon. Lady's constituency, which is performing outstandingly, with some of the best out-patient waiting times and patients charter achievements. The hon. Lady's community health council has been offered a great number of arrangements short of actually becoming a member of the trust board: it has been offered a meeting in the autumn to discuss the year ahead; it is invited to a further meeting in

the spring to finalise plans in detail, to a meeting in the summer to review progress and to bi-monthly meetings with the chairman and the chief executive, quite apart from other visiting rights. It is time for it to forget the past and work for the future.

Madam Speaker: Mr. Nicholas Winterton.

Hon. Members: Wake up.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I am sorry, Madam Speaker, but there is another Winterton in the House and I misheard.

I accept what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said—that the public accountability of NHS trusts is adequate and satisfactory—but does not she accept that the real problem lies with district health authorities, which are not in any way accountable to the public? They force policies upon the trusts which, in many cases, are unwilling to accept them because the DHAs are not accountable to the public in the same way as the trusts.

Mrs. Bottomley: The task for district health authorities is to ensure that they communicate effectively with local people. They have to assess need and set priorities, and it is important that they work closely with local authorities and Members of Parliament and with all those in the community who feel strongly about the delivery of health care. The distinction between the purchaser and the provider is now well established and, thankfully, is the subject of agreement on both sides of the House.

Mr. Blunkett: How are we to hold the Secretary of State to account when she has every intention of bailing out of her present job? Which of the shambolic changes with which she has been associated over the past four and a half years has contributed most to her decision to go?

Mrs. Bottomley: I have a great sense of achievement. Beyond our expectations, we now have 419 NHS trusts and 1 million more patients are now treated than were treated before the NHS reforms. Child immunisation is up to 90 per cent. and 80 per cent. of out-patients and people at A and E departments are being seen within half an hour. Those were all targets that we set the health service; we are delivering them effectively and I want us to do even better. I ask the Labour party why the hon. Gentleman feels unable to speak on London health services in the debate that is to be held this week. That is the question that we want answered.

Mr. Rowe: Does my right hon. Friend agree that what the public really want to know about national health service trusts is how well they are doing, and will she make absolutely certain that she encourages them to publish the good news, such as the £45 million investment in the Medway trust and the state-of-the-art oncology unit in the Maidstone trust?

Mrs. Bottomley: There has been a transformation in the amount of information available about how hospitals work —an annual report, an annual meeting, accounts that have to be audited and the business plan—quite apart from the codes of conduct and accountability that I am announcing today. My hon. Friend rightly refers to his own trust, but almost every trust in the country has seen great progress. Trusts are better for staff and patients.

Tobacco Advertising

5. Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had on banning all tobacco advertising from hoardings within one or three miles of schools.

The Minister for Health (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): We are currently negotiating with the tobacco industry to strengthen the voluntary agreement on tobacco advertising and promotion. The negotiations are confidential and we shall publish their outcome in due course.

Mr. Jones: Is not there very clear evidence from abroad to suggest that advertising increases smoking in under-age smokers? The Exchequer gets an estimated £96 million-worth of funds from under-age smokers through taxation, yet the Department spends only £5 million on health education. Is not it time to do something for the health of under-age smokers in Britain and ban tobacco advertising?

Dr. Mawhinney: First, though he may not want to do so, I suggest that the hon. Gentleman reads the evidence that I presented to the House in my Second Reading speech on the Tobacco Advertising Bill, which clearly illustrates that no concurrent evidence links cause and effect in the way that he suggests. We agree with the hon. Gentleman that advertising has a part to play and that is why we have had a voluntary agreement for 18 years. It is why we have sought over the years to tighten that agreement when it was appropriate to do so. That is what the current negotiations are about and I look forward to their success.

Dame Jill Knight: Will my right hon. Friend encourage the present trend in tobacco advertising, which seems to produce advertisements so obtuse that they fail entirely to give any message about smoking itself and merely have clearly written on the bottom the warning that smoking can severely damage health?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend makes a good point, although I am told that some in the community understand that they are tobacco advertisements. I take her point about the size of the warning, and I will bear that strongly in mind in the coming days.

Mr. McCartney: The Minister must know that in the 18 years since the agreement came in, 1,100,000 citizens have died directly because of the tobacco industry. Will the Minister give a commitment on the 13th of this month to support the all-party initiative in the Tobacco Advertising Bill—or is the simple fact that, because of the £100,000 donation to his party by Rothmans in the month before the general election, he finds it difficult to change Government policy to protect children? If he is serious about children and tobacco, perhaps he will give a commitment to give Rothmans back the £100,000 and do something to stop kids smoking.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am happy to say that there are some cracks from the Opposition Front Bench that are not worthy of a serious response. The hon. Gentleman and I together deplore the number of unnecessary deaths caused in this country by smoking. We deplore together the millions of working days lost as a result of smoking. We recognise together the importance of parental influence, parental behaviour and price—and also, I suspect, that the evidence surrounding those three issues, which is

compelling, is far more likely to be effective in reducing the death rate, which he and I deplore, than a ban on tobacco advertising.

Mr. Jessel: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in a typical constituency there are 1,300 15-year-olds, of whom about 24 per cent. smoke, and that, according to the Royal College of Physicians about one third of those—or 100 of the 1,300—will die of smoking if we continue at the present rate? Is not it totally unacceptable to advertise within easy reach of those who are young and gullible, perhaps leading them into a habit that is likely to be lethal for them?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend makes an important point. We have already made it clear in the House that there is particular concern about children and their exposure to advertising. My views on that are on the record. They are part of our current negotiations with the industry, the outcome of which we shall report to the House in due course.

Ministerial Visits

7. Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to make an official visit to Oldchurch hospital, Romford, to assess the effectiveness of the accident and emergency service.

Dr. Mawhinney: As my hon. Friend knows, I had the pleasure of visiting Havering hospitals national health service trust on 14 February this year. It is the responsibility of the local health authority to ensure that the most effective possible accident and emergency service is available for the people of Barking and Havering.

Sir Michael Neubert: Is not any proposal to reduce accident and emergency services, such as that in the Barking and Havering health district, a matter of understandable concern? Should not ease of access by road and proximity to the main centres of population be the overriding factors in determining the location of casualty departments? Does not that consideration point to the continuing need for Oldchurch hospital in that all important life-and-death role?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend is right in identifying a number of those features: they are exactly the sort of features, together with the public response, that the health authority must take into account. My hon. Friend will know that, following the public consultation, the health authority has already said that it wishes to have more information before coming to a judgment. I encourage my hon. Friend to keep reflecting to the health authority the views that he has so eloquently expressed on his constituents' behalf, today and to me in private.

Ms Primarolo: The Minister will be aware of the problems already being experienced by Redbridge healthcare trust and that the closure of the Oldchurch hospital will put extra pressure on the accident and emergency units. Will he explain to the House why the Government are not only closing accident and emergency units in London but, with the closure of the Queen Elizabeth hospital in Hackney, plan to reduce the number of paediatric beds in London by more than half by 2003? How will children in London be treated under his Government?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am happy to be able to tell the hon. Lady that children in London are getting better treatment than they ever have before and that that will continue to be the case. I am aware of the concerns about Redbridge healthcare NHS trust. I am also aware, as the hon. Lady may not be, that the response of the Redbridge healthcare NHS trust to the public consultation was welcoming. It made it clear publicly that it would have preferred the centralisation to be at the Harold Wood hospital. As I have told the House before, if there are to be changes in accident and emergency provision in London, they will take place only when we are entirely satisfied that adequate and appropriate alternative arrangements are in place.

Mr. Wolfson: May I ask a broader question on the issue of accident and emergency units?

Madam Speaker: Order. The question is much narrower than that. Does the hon. Member's question refer to Romford and Oldchurch hospital?

Mr. Wolfson: In comparison with the Romford situation, Madam Speaker, what criteria are used, in deciding whether such a unit should remain open, to measure the time that it takes to get emergency cases to accident and emergency units in times of heavy traffic?

Dr. Mawhinney: As in Romford, Oldchurch, Havering and other parts of the country, it is for the local health authority to consult, taking into account local circumstances and expert advice, before making judgments about what is appropriate.

Civil Servants (Health Scheme)

8. Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many civil servants in her Department have taken up the offer from the Friendly Society to join the health scheme.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for the individuals concerned.

Mr. Miller: It is extraordinary that the Minister seems unwilling to comment on advertising that clearly seeks to encourage people to queue-jump in the health service. Will he unequivocally condemn the advertising material that is currently circulating, which encourages queue-jumping among civil servants in his own Department?

Mr. Sackville: The Post Office and Civil Service Sanatorium Society, now known as The Society, offers certain services that cost its members 45p a week to supplement, rather than substitute for, the NHS. Its 1 million or so public sector or ex-public sector members will take due note of the hon. Gentleman's attitude. Perhaps he will find something more substantive to ask me on another occasion.

Mr. Dickens: Is not it always the Conservative party that has stood for freedom of choice? Do not we believe that people should be allowed to spend their own money on whatever they choose? Of course, that is a fact, and long may it continue.

Mr. Sackville: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The hon. Gentleman's question gives us some foretaste of the horrors to come in the unlikely event of a Labour Government.

Personal Social Services

9. Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received regarding the introduction of charges for personal social services other than residential care; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Local authorities have had a discretionary power to charge since January 1984. In January this year, the Department issued new guidance about the use of these powers and since then seven representations have been received.

Mr. Mandelson: Is the Minister aware that, as a result of the Government's insistence on users paying for services such as home care, day centres and meals on wheels, some of the most frail and vulnerable members of the community must either do without those services or make invidious spending choices between heating or eating and cleaning or laundry? Does he accept that that undermines any true concept of care in the community? Does he further accept that the Government have a responsibility at least to monitor and to assess the impact of those charges in every part of the country?

Mr. Bowis: The answer is no. I do not accept the premise on which the hon. Gentleman makes his assertion. The average charge in Cleveland, the hon. Gentleman's own authority, is 4 per cent. I do not believe that that will cause hardship to anyone who can afford it. I remind the hon. Gentleman that it is entirely up to his authority, which has discretion in the matter, whether to set charges and the level at which to set them. All that we require is that charges are reasonable and reflect the individual's ability to pay. There is no reason on earth why Cleveland council should not exempt people in need or give discounts to those on lower incomes.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Is not the truth that people who might otherwise be forced to enter a residential home and perhaps pay £1,000 a month would like to contribute to the cost of local authority services that enable them to remain in their own homes? That is good value for money and councils should be encouraged to charge where that is sensible and people can afford to pay.

Mr. Bowis: I entirely agree. My hon. Friend is right to say that people who can afford to pay would think it entirely reasonable to be asked to make a contribution to the cost of the services provided to them. If a reasonable charge taking into account ability to pay is levied, that income can bring more benefits to more people in need and raise the quality of the care provided. That must be in everyone's interests.

Ms Lynne: Is not it a fact that a number of authorities throughout the country are introducing charges for community care and that that is the ultimate responsibility of this Government, because of the underfunding of community care? Instead of blaming the local authorities, the Minister himself should take responsibility.

Mr. Bowis: That is quite absurd. The average across the country is under 9 per cent. I remind the hon. Lady about the amount that the Government are putting into community care: in the first year, it was £565 million; this year, it is up to £1.2 billion; next year, it will be £1.8 billion; and the year after, it will be £2.2 billion. If she looks at the top-up that we have been able to incorporate in that for respite and day care, she will see that the Government are backing councils around the country in enabling them to look after people in their own homes, when that is appropriate and when that is what they want.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that the revenue from the charges allows local authorities to expand the services on offer? Those who oppose the charges should tell us which services they would cut or which taxes they would increase.

Mr. Bowis: My hon. Friend is exactly right. It does indeed give councils that possibility. The level of charge depends on the level of cost. Cost depends on efficient delivery of service, and in the partnership between the usually good Conservative councils and the independent sector, which provides better services at lower costs, charges will be lower than those in the high-spending, high-cost Labour authorities.

Breast Cancer

10. Mr. Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what funds have been allowed by her Department in each of the last three years to support research into breast cancer.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government spent £3.8 million on breast cancer research in 1992-93, of which £3.1 million was through the Medical Research Council. My Department provided £381,000 in 1990-91 for research specifically into breast cancer; £526,000 in 1991-92; and £607,000 in 1992-93—an increase of 59 per cent. over the three years.

Mr. Connarty: I am very disappointed with the answer that I have just received from the Minister. It reeks of complacency in the light of the 26,000 cases that are diagnosed every year and the 16,000 deaths among women in the UK every year. I wonder whether the Secretary of State shares the concern of Professor Baum, who spoke to the all-party group on breast cancer, and said that the incidence of breast cancer in Britain is increasing faster than diagnosis through screening. Does she support his contention that research in molecular biology is the way forward? Is she aware of the £15 million that the Royal Marsden is trying to raise for research into breast cancer? Will she show some seriousness in the matter and put some serious money into the research to help the women who are frightened by the growing incidence of breast cancer in this country?

Mrs. Bottomley: We give extremely high priority to breast cancer, it being the most common form of cancer suffered by women. One in 12 women is likely to develop some form of breast cancer at some stage. The hon. Gentleman mentioned Professor Baum. I received a letter from him only yesterday commending the excellent mammography screening service that takes place in this country and referring to the great improvement in life expectancy, which he—as the hon. Gentleman will understand—was also associating with the need to take forward some of the treatments that he advocates.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Is not my right hon. Friend concerned about the high incidence of breast cancer? As one who has recently been screened, I commend her on the screening process and suggest that it be widened, but is she

aware that we need to put more resources towards research, because, at the end of the day, that will save the NHS money on treatment costs?

Mrs. Bottomley: I accept my hon. Friend's comments. She may wish to know that 7 per cent. of all expenditure on the health service goes on the treatment of cancer. The screening programme has been a success. Some 70 per cent. of people keep their appointments. I am concerned, as my hon. Friend will be, about the 30 per cent. who are not keeping their appointments. We know that we could do better in picking up cases earlier if only people would keep their appointments. As for research funding, we have to weigh this matter alongside other important priorities.

Dr. Wright: Did the Minister see the recent "Panorama" programme in which many women who were dying of breast cancer described how their impending death would be the result of inadequate clinical treatment in the areas where they lived? Is not it a disgrace that high-quality, specialist treatment is not available to every woman who needs it? Why will not the Government divert their attention from the organisational mayhem that they are causing inside the health service and devote their resources to driving up clinical standards?

Mrs. Bottomley: Frankly, I deplore programmes that seek to generate great alarm unreasonably among members of the public. I know that that is the Labour party's stock in trade, but I nevertheless deplore it.

The standard of treatment for cancers is improving all the time and life expectancy is increasing as a result. However, as we learn from the most beneficial forms of intervention, we need to carry forward good practice. An expert advisory committee reports to the Chief Medical Officer on cancer generally and I hope that we will be able to produce better guidance on cancers that need to be treated at specialist centres and those that can be properly treated at local centres.

District Health Authorities

11. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps are being taken to ensure that district health authorities involve the public fully in their purchasing decisions.

Dr. Mawhinney: I wrote in January this year to all district health authorities to ensure that arrangements were in place to seek, and act upon, the views of local people. The response to my letter indicated that many, but not all, authorities had done much good work to involve local people.

I have asked the chief executive of the national health service executive to write to regional directors to ensure that appropriate action is taken locally to address identified shortcomings and to report back to me later in the year.

Mr. Paice: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Does he accept that the convenience of facilities is vital, especially to people living in rural areas? In that context, is he aware that my constituents in Ely are anxious for the Princess of Wales former RAF hospital to have a wide range of services, including the treatment of minor injuries and, they hope, day surgery in the near future? Will he speak to the local health authority to ensure that it notes the views of local people, not just those of the professionals involved?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend is right to draw particular attention to the issue of convenience as it relates to people who live in rural areas. That is one of the issues that I have drawn to the attention of the service generally. As for the latter part of my hon. Friend's question, I know that he and other Conservative Members are acting assiduously on behalf of their constituents—not least because they have already raised the matter with me.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: Is the Minister aware that if the public in my constituency had been consulted about purchasing decisions, they would have asked for resources to cut the present four-year waiting list to see an orthopaedic consultant at Addenbrookes hospital?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am encouraged by the fact that, for the first time that I can remember, the hon. Lady is starting to take a constructive attitude to the delivery of health care in her constituency.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: I recognise the importance of district health authorities' ensuring accountability in the provision of local health services. Does my right hon. Friend agree, however, that the primary impetus comes from GP fundholders, who now treat 88 per cent. of my constituents? Will he ensure that the scope of reforms for GP fundholders is widened via the Bromsgrove project —which allows them to purchase accident and emergency services as well—and that single-hander GP fundholders will be allowed to operate?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend is right to point to the positive effect of GP fundholding in terms of the input of local people's views. I hope that he will be encouraged to learn that I have written to all GP fundholders in the country, asking them to suggest from their experience how we can best expand the scheme from April next year. We shall be holding a national conference on that very subject on Thursday this week.

Malnutrition (Hospital In-patients)

12. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will investigate malnutrition in hospital in-patients.

Mr. Bowis: Our nutrition task force, which was set up in October 1992 under "The Health of the Nation" initiative, will be updating current guidance on nutrition for hospitals and health authorities.

Mrs. Fyfe: Is the Minister aware that a recent study of in-patients leaving hospital showed them to be less well nourished than they were when they entered hospital? Will he discuss the matter—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sure that the Minister cannot hear what the hon. Lady is saying. *[Interruption.]* Order. Let us hear what she is saying.

Mrs. Fyfe: Is the Minister aware that a recent study of in-patients leaving hospitals shows them to be less well-nourished than when they entered hospital? Will he discuss the matter with his ministerial colleagues in Scotland to ensure that patients do not rely on their visitors to bring them Chinese takeaways as well as the traditional bunches of grapes?

Mr. Bowis: I think that I caught most of that question. The answer is that, yes, I am aware of the report—although of course I am not responsible for hospitals in Scotland,

which are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. The report appeared in the *British Medical Journal*. The hon. Lady will also have seen that Dr. Pennington made it very clear that the main problem is loss of appetite associated with illness. Enteral and parenteral feeding is certainly necessary in some cases, but in most cases hospitals need to have good nutritional policy. That is why our task force is issuing guidance and a handbook and is training health professionals. I am sure that the next time the hon. Lady visits a hospital she will see the benefits.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 April.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Morgan: Does the Prime Minister agree with the words of the Home Secretary to the Institute of Directors convention this morning, when he said that the police, the courts and the prison services were having to pick up the pieces for the failures of others? Does he agree that the word "others" may include those who have been governing this country for the last 15 years?

The Prime Minister: I have not seen the text of what my right hon. and learned Friend said, but I am sure that he was seeking to convey that the causes of crime are many and varied; that it is not possible to let all the aspects of crime simply be dealt with by the police and others; and that everyone in authority, whatever that authority may be, may have to, and should be prepared to, take their share of responsibility.

Mr. Rathbone: Will the Prime Minister send a special message of encouragement to South Africa as the democratic elections continue there in order to welcome this final step away from apartheid? Will he continue to bend his energy to bringing South Africa back into the Commonwealth?

The Prime Minister: I think that people around the world welcome the elections that are taking place in South Africa and hope that they can be concluded without any more of the violence that has scarred events in the last few days. When the election is concluded and a new multi-racial government is formed, I very much hope that South Africa will decide to rejoin the Commonwealth. As far as this Government is concerned, it will be a very welcome entrant.

Mr. John Smith: How can the Prime Minister justify his Government's spending £500 million of taxpayers' money in fees to private consultants when, as is revealed in today's *Financial Times*, only £10 million was gained as a result?

The Prime Minister: Let me set out some of the points related to that, because I think that the right hon. and learned Gentleman may tend to agree with much of what I have to say about it. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is asking questions that I myself asked, which is the reason why the scrutiny was established in the first place. It was set up because of the growth in expenditure on consultants and in order to find out whether it is good value for money or whether better value for money can be obtained. If it confirms that the expenditure is producing good results, we will maintain it; if not, we will make the changes required.

As far as savings are concerned, the spending is on specialist advice to support programmes. It is not a search to find savings especially.

Mr. John Smith: In other words, it is true: another grotesque waste of taxpayers' money has occurred. Is not the Prime Minister's game to delay this and any other bad news until after the local and European elections are over? Why not tell the truth for once before an election?

Hon. Members: Withdraw!

Madam Speaker: Order. I believe that I heard the right hon. and learned Gentleman correctly and found nothing unparliamentary in what he said, but would he care to repeat it so that it is clear to all of us?

Mr. John Smith: What I suggested to the Prime Minister was that for once he should tell the truth before an election.

The Prime Minister: If there was an intention to hide anything, perhaps the right hon. and learned Gentleman could explain why we established the scrutiny in the first place—it is precisely to determine that the expenditure is conducted properly. However, since the right hon. and learned Gentleman wishes to judge without having seen the report, before the report is completed and without any understanding of the report or what is in it, let me give him a little more information. The examination of where the money is spent includes matters such as helping to design and evaluate weapons systems for the armed forces—not something that the civil service could do—and conducting feasibility studies on technical aspects of the road programme, which is not something that could be done without specialist advice. The right hon. and learned Gentleman should find out some facts before he smears.

Mr. John Smith: Does not the Prime Minister realise that families all over Britain—the real quiet majority—who are now paying huge tax increases imposed by his Government will bitterly resent this further example of the Government's now legendary incompetence?

The Prime Minister: The whole House will have noted that the right hon. and learned Gentleman was prepared to criticise, was wrong and was not prepared to apologise. I am glad at last that he is taking a closer interest in value for money and efficiency. I hope that he will apply the same test to Labour local authorities up and down the country—every single one he knows. If he were really concerned about tax, perhaps he would indicate what aspects of public expenditure restraint he would support. If he were concerned about local authority tax, perhaps he will explain why he and his party oppose compulsory competitive tendering despite the savings that it has made in councils up and down the country. Every single thing that he has said today is bogus.

Mr. Rowe: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, despite having inherited a remarkably sound economy and having driven up the council tax quite unnecessarily, the

Labour-Liberal coalition which runs Kent has decided to cut the police budget? Will he comment on the amazing gap between the statements of the Front-Bench spokesmen of the two Opposition parties and what they do when they have office?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend has made the point very clearly. I am not familiar with the particular illustration that he produced, but there are many similar illustrations of which the House is well aware.

Q2. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Callaghan: Is the Prime Minister aware of the statistics that have just been produced by the North West health authority which show a 60 per cent. increase over three years in the number of youngsters aged 18 and under who have to attend hospital for treatment for drug abuse? In view of those alarming figures and the fact that there is a connection between serious crime and drug abuse, as evidenced by the number of murders in our cities, will the Prime Minister tell the House exactly what he intends to do to combat the evils of drug abuse and serious crime?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman touches on a very important matter and I am pleased to respond to him. The sum total of expenditure by the Government on drug-related programmes and other matters related to drugs now exceeds £500 million a year. I have asked my right hon. Friend the Lord President to bring together the expenditure all across Government to make sure that we can target it at the right Departments and at the right problems to begin to cope with the problem of drugs, which exists right across the world but which I think every hon. Member would wish us to tackle at the roots as speedily as possible.

Q3. **Sir George Gardiner:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Sir George Gardiner: In the course of his day, my right hon. Friend may have time to look at the final draft of the Conservative manifesto for the European elections. When he does, will he make doubly sure that it emphasises the crucial choice that faces our people in those elections—between Conservative resistance to further moves towards Euro federalism, while we protect British jobs by staying out of the social chapter, and Labour and Liberal eagerness to sign up to anything, to hand over control to the Eurocrats in Brussels and to saddle us with employment costs that would hit directly at British jobs?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right. There is a sharp contrast between our policies on Europe and those of both the main Opposition parties, whose policies are almost indistinguishable. We believe in a free trade, deregulated, outward-looking Europe of independent nation states—unlike either of the Opposition parties, both of which want regulation, intervention and more high spending in a federal European state. That is not for us and I do not believe that it is the wish of the British nation either.

Q4. **Ms Quin:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Ms Quin: Following the previous question, and as the Prime Minister feels that he has a lot in common with the four countries that hope to join the European Union next year, will he tell the House how many of them have supported his Government in requesting an opt-out from the social chapter?

The Prime Minister: I think that one will find that across Europe—*[Interruption.]* Across Europe, as the hon. Lady knows, countries are recognising that Britain is more competitive because we had the courage to stand up and say that destroying jobs in Europe was not a good idea. There are 19 million people unemployed in Europe; only in this country is unemployment falling. Only this country is becoming more competitive, and that is because we were prepared to say no to policies that destroy jobs and yes to policies that create jobs.

Q5. **Mr. Kynoch:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Kynoch: Although controlling inflation is not an end in itself, does my right hon. Friend agree with me and the many business men in my constituency that it is, however, a precondition for falling unemployment, low interest rates and, ultimately, sound and stable economic growth?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right about that. The necessity to get inflation down is self-evident, as is the necessity to keep it down to have the economy growing steadily. As a result of the disinflationary policy that we have followed, we have now had growth for eight successive quarters, unemployment has fallen by a quarter of a million and we have a higher growth pattern than any other nation in the European Community. A CBI survey published this morning showed business optimism continuing to rise. That is a scenario which most other nations in Europe would be pleased to have.

Q6. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Williams: On this historic day in South Africa, will the Prime Minister congratulate Nelson Mandela, the African National Congress and everyone else involved in the anti-apartheid movement for bringing democracy at last to South Africa?

The Prime Minister: I am happy to extend my congratulations to Mr. Mandela, to President de Klerk and to everyone else who over the years has worked towards a non-racial South Africa. That will be welcomed by people across the world, and I hope that it will bring greater stability for South Africa in the future.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Has my right hon. Friend noticed the recent extensive and co-ordinated press attention to concerns about the Government's proposals to deal with new age travellers? Perhaps I can tell my right hon. Friend that the quiet majority in my constituency very much support the Government's plans as contained in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, which will give them real protection from those unlawful activities.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right. New age travellers have been an immense nuisance, not least, of course, in the west country over recent years. The legislation proposed by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will give the police far more powers to deal with them. In view of the difficulty that there has been in the west country, I am surprised that we have not had more support from the Liberal Democrats on that matter.

Q7. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 April.

The Prime Minister: . I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Enright: How does the Prime Minister square the suppression of the sleaze about Westminster on the "Panorama" programme with his aim of open government?

The Prime Minister: No Government have ever been more open than this one and there is no suspicion of sleaze.

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Have you received a request from the Chancellor of the Duchy to make a statement on today's revelation of the Cabinet Office efficiency scrutiny report, which shows that the cost of employing consultants —[HON. MEMBERS: "Bogus."]—that the savings from employing consultants is only 2 per cent. of the cost of using them? *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. It is a simple answer: no. *[Interruption.]*

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. I have answered the point of order. The question was, have I received a request from a Minister? The answer is no.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy (Liverpool, Broadgreen): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I have received your letter concerning the conduct of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) in breach of the rules governing the use of the House of Commons emblem in writing to constituents outside his own constituency on party political matters. In the letter, the Serjeant at Arms has made it clear that an explanation has been given by the hon. Member. Would you pass on to the House that explanation in view of the fact that the hon. Member is an experienced Member of the House and has been in breach of those rules before?

Madam Speaker: As it concerns the hon. Lady and her constituency, I shall certainly see that she gets the explanation to which she is entitled.

Mr. Peter Kilfoyle (Liverpool, Walton) *rose—*

Madam Speaker: That answer applies to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle) in the same way; and I shall see that he gets an explanation too.

Mr. Kilfoyle *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Is it on a different point of order?

Mr. Kilfoyle: It is further to the point of order.

Madam Speaker: There can be no further point of order. I know that the hon. Lady and the hon. Gentleman represent neighbouring constituencies. The point of order applies to them both, and I shall let him have an explanation.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I think the point that is being made is that my hon. Friend the Member for Walton would like a public statement which sets out the rules exactly.

Madam Speaker: If a public statement is required to set out the rules, I shall certainly be prepared to provide one so that every hon. Member will know about the rules. If that is the case, I shall certainly see that a public statement is made as early as possible. I shall be delighted to make an announcement. It is not often that I get time to say anything.

Mr. Kilfoyle: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In addition to the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mrs. Kennedy), is not it an affront to the House that, notwithstanding the fact that the letter which I received gave an assurance that there would not be a repetition of the distribution of the smear letter, dated 21 April, which has been going out in various constituencies in Liverpool since then, those same letters have been distributed in constituencies outside Mossley Hill? Is not that contempt of the House?

Madam Speaker: I shall certainly look at the matter that the hon. Gentleman raises and I shall be prepared to make a statement to the House on the general question of the use of our stationery for political matters.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. If I heard the hon. Member for Broadgreen correctly, she said that the problem involving the hon. Member for Mossley Hill had happened before. If that statement by the hon. Lady is correct, surely only slapping hon. Members on the hand for something and allowing them to do it again is not satisfactory.

Madam Speaker: That is why I intend to make a statement about the matter. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mrs. Kennedy) will receive the explanation that I promised to give. I have been asked if I will make a statement to the House on the principle of the use of stationery for party political purposes, and I have agreed to do so. What I have said should be absolutely clear.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. It is a convention of the House that, when a Minister quotes from a document, the document is placed on the Table so that other hon. Members may see whether the quotations are correct. At Question Time today the Prime Minister, in answer to one of my hon. Friends, quoted certain words. I hope that you, Madam Speaker, will ensure that the document in question is placed on the Table at the earliest opportunity.

Madam Speaker: It needs to be a direct quotation from a state paper. However, I shall check *Hansard*, and if the hon. Gentleman is correct I shall see that our conventions are observed.

Insolvency

3.35 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to make the holder of a floating charge liable for the fees of any administrative receiver appointed by him, such fees to be recoverable by the chargeholder from the assets of the debtor company, the debt ranking pari passu with unsecured creditors; to introduce a lien system into contract law so that contractors, sub-contractors and suppliers in the construction and building industry can register a lien against an employer's interest in the land or property, ensuring that, in the case of the employer failing, such contractors, sub-contractors and suppliers are repaid before any floating charge on the development project; and for connected purposes.

The purpose of the Bill is to correct some of the injustices that have crept into our law on insolvency and receivership. No insolvency system will ever satisfy everyone as, by definition, there is insufficient money left in an insolvent company to pay everyone. Nevertheless, a string of cases that have been brought to my attention convince me that there is a fundamental imbalance in the law and that this leaves insolvency practitioners, particularly when they are acting as administrative receivers, with no incentive to keep their fees at a reasonable level, no incentive to secure a decent price for assets that they sell and, in the ultimate insolvency case, no incentive even to expedite their work.

Many hon. Members have expressed concern about the Maxwell case in which the work appears to drag on and on and most of the money seems to be going to the insolvency practitioners. I have reports on three cases in my constituency, ranging from a retail chain to a property developer, which between them have run for 17 years. Only one of them has been completed. Huge sums of money are still locked up in the other two.

The Government have, rightly, brought forward some proposals of their own. Their consultation document considers the question of how potentially viable companies can be kept going—a noble aim. I am concerned here with a quite different matter—the interests of the trade creditors and, indeed, individual creditors, who may be pensioners or even workers. I am concerned about the fact that, by appointing an administrative receiver, the holder of a floating charge—in plain English, the bank—can sweep everyone else aside and come to the top of the queue.

I propose two changes in the law. The first is to make the bank appointing insolvency practitioners working as administrative receivers liable for the fees. Thus, for the first time, the people to whom the practitioners report would have an incentive to persuade them to keep their fees down. In addition, as they would be able to recover their money only as a result of the company's becoming viable again or at the end of the queue along with the trade creditors, they would have an incentive to encourage the receivers to secure sensible prices for assets sold.

My second proposal concerns the building and construction industry, which, in many ways, is the worst insolvency area of all. Such cases often involve tens of millions of pounds. Very often construction projects are financed largely by trade creditors through the supply of goods on short-term credit. The banks often have a relatively small role, yet, through the legal devices that I have mentioned, they can secure priority. But the particular problem in the building and construction industry, unlike, for example, manufacturing, is that it is not possible to secure what is called a Ramalpa clause.

If I were a shoe manufacturer supplying a retailer, I could have a Ramalpa clause written into the contract. It would provide that the title to the goods would not pass until I had received my money. If the company were to go under, I would send a lorry round to pick up my shoes. English common law does not allow this in the case of any goods that have been united into the land—bricks that have gone into a house, cement that has gone into a structure, or tarmacadam that has gone into a road.

A company in my constituency supplied goods to a contractor working on the Thanet way in my constituency. An independent credit agency told the company that the contractor was good for at least half a million pounds' worth of credit. The contractor's bankers sent the company letters assuring it that the contracting company was fully viable and had no financial problems. In less than three months that same bank had appointed an administrative receiver. The company was given only 24 hours to pay. Of course, it could not do so within that period, although there were some who felt that it was a viable company. My constituency company, which had delivered a quarter of a million pounds' worth of goods, saw the only asset—the finished product—sold for a derisory sum. It received no payment of any sort.

I propose introducing a Canadian-style lien sytem which would allow contractors and suppliers to register where they have delivered goods and services to a construction project. It would prevent a bank that appointed an administrative receiver from taking precedence on a floating charge over the suppliers receiving payment for the goods and services that they had provided. There need not be compulsion. There is no reason why developers should not be free, with the agreement freely entered into of the suppliers, to opt out. The important feature is that the option would exist, as it does with the supply of manufactured goods in other areas of business. Such a system would prevent a bank that perhaps had provided only a relatively small proportion of the total credit from pulling the rug and appointing its own administrative receiver. That receiver would then pay off the bank, fill his pockets with an enormous fee, and sell the product for a derisory sum.

The lien system was introduced in Canada, which has the same system of common law as the United Kingdom, against cries of anguish from many vested interests in the financial system. That happened four years ago. The system has been a great success ever since. I have copies of the Canadian Act that sets out the lien system, which is the second of my two proposals, if anyone would like to read them.

Our insolvency system is inefficient and unfair to the trade creditor and the individual creditor. Above all, it is manifestly unreasonable that someone appointed by the banks should have so much power without any accountability in terms of whether a reasonable fee is charged, whether a reasonable price is obtained for the asset that is sold and whether the person appointed gets on with the job in an ultimate insolvency case. In many instances the insolvency practitioner wears the same hat as the administrative receiver at the final stage.

There is no magic solution to the problems that I have mentioned. I believe, however, that the two changes in the law that my Bill offers would do a great deal to right the significant imbalance in an important area of the law.

Question put and agreed to.

[Mr. Julian Brazier]

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Julian Brazier, Sir Donald Thompson, Sir Trevor Skeet, Mr. Bob Dunn, Mrs. Edwina Currie, Mr. Andrew Hunter, Mr. Quentin Davies, Mr. David Martin, Mr. James Clappison, Mr. John Horam, Dr. Robert Spink and Mr. Jonathan Evans.

INSOLVENCY

Mr. Julian Brazier accordingly presented a Bill to make the holder of a floating charge liable for the fees of any administrative receiver appointed by him, such fees to be recoverable by the chargeholder from the assets of the debtor company, the debt ranking *pari passu* with unsecured creditors; to introduce a lien system into contract law so that contractor, sub-contractors and suppliers in the construction and building industry can register a lien against an employer's interest in the land or property, ensuring that, in the case of the employer failing, such contractors, sub-contractors and suppliers are repaid before any floating charge on the development project; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 24 June, and to be printed. [Bill 99.]

Orders of the Day

Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill

[*Lords*]

Order for Second Reading read.

3.43 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Michael Howard): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Crime and lawlessness pose a supreme challenge to all modern democracies—

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. A substantial part of the Bill concerns Scotland. We in Scotland have been put into the Bill, as it were, in a most haphazard way. We do not even have a Scottish Office Minister on the Government Front Bench. Is not that showing contempt for the House?

Madam Speaker: It is not for me to determine which Ministers should be present. All Ministers have a collective responsibility for Government legislation. *[Interruption.]* I see that a senior Scottish Minister has now taken his place on the Front Bench.

Mr. Howard: Crime and lawlessness pose a supreme challenge to all modern democracies. As I have repeatedly made clear, the Government are determined to meet that challenge by taking action across the board to ensure that we have the most efficient and effective criminal justice system possible. That is why we have taken action to ensure that more crimes are prevented and more criminals are caught, convicted and punished.

The police service is at the centre of our strategy to meet that challenge. I believe that our police service is second to none in the world. And no Government has done more to support the police than this Government. Since we came to power, spending on the police has increased by 87 per cent. in real terms. The number of police officers has increased by more than 16,000. The number of civilians working in forces has increased by 16,000. What we now need to address is how we make sure that the huge investment that we make in our police service—amounting as it does to more than £6 billion a year—is deployed wisely and effectively.

To achieve that, we need to examine the framework within which the police operate and, where necessary, to bring it up to date so that it meets modern requirements. That framework has become out of date and needs reform. The financial arrangements for police forces and police authorities are antiquated and arcane. Too much detail must be referred to the Home Office. The arrangements for accountability are opaque. People do not know how to influence the priorities of their local forces, nor how the accountability of the police is exercised. Personnel and pay procedures are outdated. The rank structure is top heavy. Pay depends too much on length rather than quality of service. Technology and scientific advances offer enormous scope for fighting crime more effectively, but much local police information technology has been developed without co-ordination and is incompatible between forces.

The present programme of change affecting the police looks formidable, but much of it represents change which the police themselves have been actively seeking.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): I do not yet see a Welsh Office Minister present. The Secretary of State is concentrating on matters concerning the police. I hope that he will refer to magistrates courts and the Lord Chancellor's power compulsorily to amalgamate magistrates courts committees. I warn him that the proposal in north Wales whereby Gwynedd and Clwyd are to be amalgamated may not work because of cultural and linguistic differences and the massive size of the terrain. Will he ensure that there is a rethink on that matter in north Wales?

Mr. Howard: No Welsh Office Minister is on the Front Bench because I am responsible for policing in Wales as well as England. I assure the hon. Gentleman that, if he is patient for a little longer, he will hear what I have to say about the relevant provisions in the Bill affecting magistrates courts.

The reform programme has a number of strands. The local accountability of police forces must be strengthened and made clear to local people. The financial and managerial framework within which chief constables and forces operate must be modernised. The police service must have up-to-date personnel management and discipline procedures; and we need a national strategy for the development of information technology for the police.

Many forces are already modernising their management arrangements on lines recommended by the Audit Commission. More responsibility for decision taking is being pushed down the line to local commanders who are best placed to judge how to deploy resources locally to best effect. Increased use is being made of civilians to free up more officers for front-line policing. But some things, such as setting the legal framework for the exercise of police powers, can be done only by the Government.

The theme of our reform programme is clear—modernisation. But we must modernise in a way that keeps the key elements of British policing. The sharing of power between the Home Secretary, the local police authority and the chief constable will continue. Policing in England and Wales by local police forces, rather than some new national or regional structure, will continue. I have no plans to introduce a programme of amalgamations. The operational independence of police constables will continue, as will the tradition of combining a police law enforcement role with wider responsibilities to help local people.

Part I of the Bill will provide the cornerstone for modernising the arrangements for police accountability, finance, management and personnel procedures. It will buttress the local basis of policing in this country through creating strong, independent local police authorities. It will give chief constables greater freedom to manage their forces to best effect. It will enable people to see and influence local policing priorities and to judge the performance of their local force. It will provide for better personnel management and discipline procedures for the police service.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): On the basis of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's law and order policies, what is his latest estimate of how much longer they will need to be in operation before crime in this country—and in my constituency, where it has doubled—returns to the level it was at under the Labour Government?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman will know that over the past 15 years crime has risen throughout the western industrialised world. I certainly hope that the various measures I am putting in place will help to make a difference.

Each police force will be maintained, as now, by a local police authority. Local police authorities will be strengthened and given clear responsibilities, which are set out in clause 4. There will be fewer financial controls from the centre. Each police authority will be required to set local policing objectives, to publish a local policing plan for its area, and to report annually on the outcome of that plan. For the first time, local people everywhere will be able to see clearly what their local police are doing with their money, and how well they are doing it.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Will the Bill correct the disgraceful sort of activity that is going on in Cambridgeshire—and, I suspect, in other places—where Liberal or Labour-controlled county councils switch funds intended for the police to other purposes? Will the Bill put an end to that sort of scandal?

Mr. Howard: The Bill will give no guarantee that the irresponsibility frequently demonstrated by Opposition parties will not continue. With local policing, there will inevitably continue to be a local element, and that will entail a risk of the folly perpetrated by the Opposition parties—illustrated by the case of Cambridgeshire.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Some local authorities, however, face a genuine dilemma. They are told by the Home Office that if they go to full establishment they will not be capped, but the Department of the Environment tells them a quite different story. Thus they find it difficult to judge what to do. Will the Home Secretary hold some discussions on that?

Mr. Howard: The answer to that dilemma is that local authorities should have proper regard to their priorities. If they give the provision of an effective police force the priority that that deserves, they will find a ready answer to the dilemma that the hon. Gentleman identifies.

As the role of police authorities is changing, I believe that their composition should change too. They need to be small enough to function effectively as decision-taking bodies. They should include local people with a wide range of experience and expertise who may not have the time, or the inclination, to be councillors or magistrates. Schedule 2 sets out the procedures by which independent members of police authorities will be selected.

The Government accepted in another place that the members of each police authority should continue to choose their chairman and that, in order to stress the independence of the new members, the Home Secretary alone should not select the independent members; but nor should they be selected by the councillor and magistrate members of the authority alone. So the procedures set out in the Bill reflect a balance between the influence of the Home Secretary and the influence of the other members of police authorities.

I reject entirely the view long held by members of the Labour party that there should be directly elected police authorities. That would be a recipe for politicising the

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police service. It would also mean removing all magistrates from the work of police authorities. I believe that that would be a retrograde step.

The Bill abolishes unnecessary central controls—

Mr. Worthington *rose—*

Mr. Howard: I must make progress.

As I was saying, the Bill abolishes unnecessary central controls on police manpower by removing the power of the Home Secretary to set establishment levels. In future, the number of constables in a force will be a matter for local decision, not for the Home Secretary. Different forces have different priorities. For some the key to greater effectiveness may be investment in technology; for others it may be an expansion of the number of officers or civilians working on crime prevention. The best balance in resources for each force is a matter for them to settle locally with their police authority. It is not a matter for me.

I intend also to reduce central controls on capital expenditure by repealing requirements to obtain the Home Secretary's consent. There has been too much second guessing at the centre on the spending of capital resources by forces, and I want to see central provision reserved solely for major projects.

Clause 10 gives the chief constable management responsibility for civilian staff working within the force. This will encourage an integrated approach to the use of manpower and should foster a greater sense of cohesion between uniformed and civilian members of police forces.

We also propose to introduce a code of practice under clause 13 which will encourage police authorities to delegate day-to-day financial responsibilities to chief constables, as already happens in some, but by no means all, police areas. The Audit Commission and many senior police officers have called for that. These measures represent a considerable transfer of power from central Government to local police authorities and forces. They will give the police new flexibility to meet local needs.

The Bill also provides a clear framework for setting police priorities and measuring performance. Clause 13 also enables the Home Secretary to set key objectives for policing and to ensure that police authorities set performance targets for measuring the achievement of those objectives. Both the key objectives set by the Home Secretary and the local objectives set by the authority will be included in the local policing plan to which the chief constable will have regard. Police authorities and the Home Secretary have always influenced policing. The concept of a local plan—which I expect to be agreed between the chief constable and the police authority—simply crystallises existing relationships in a way that is visible to the public.

Mr. Douglas French (Gloucester): For the benefit of the House, will my right hon. and learned Friend clarify what he means by the words "have regard" in the context of the attention that a chief constable must pay to the guidelines set by the police committee?

Mr. Howard: It is a well-known concept. In his decisions, the chief constable will have to take carefully into account what is in the local plan. His operational independence is unaffected.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): This is an important point. Will the Home Secretary confirm that the performance targets set by the Secretary of State in pursuance of the objectives will be mandatory and not discretionary on the authority?

Mr. Howard: In common with other aspects of the local plan, they will be matters to which the chief constable will have to have regard. I hope that chief constables and police forces will achieve those performance targets at which I want them to aim. As I have said, all these are matters to which the chief constable will have to have regard.

Mr. Blair: The important question asked by the hon. Member for Gloucester (Mr. French) related to the difference between having regard to them and being bound by them. Chief constables will have to have regard to the objectives, but will the Home Secretary confirm that if he directs them on the performance targets that are set in pursuance of those objectives they will be mandatory and not discretionary?

Mr. Howard: The Secretary of State's power of direction is a different matter. Police plans and performance targets are matters to which police constables have to have regard. Of course, the Secretary of State has power to issue directions, but that raises different considerations. It is a well-known concept and I am astonished that it causes the hon. Gentleman any difficulty.

Mr. Blair: Perhaps I can explain why it causes difficulties, not just for me but for the police. Clause 13, which inserts new section 28A in the Police Act 1964, gives the Secretary of State power to determine objectives. He is also empowered, at his own discretion entirely, to issue mandatory performance targets in pursuit of the objectives. Making those performance targets mandatory means that the police authority does not merely have to have regard to them, but will be obliged to follow them irrespective of whether it wants to do so.

Mr. Howard: As I said a moment ago, the direction making power contained in clause 13 of the Bill is different from the objectives and plans to which I have previously referred. There is a power in clause 13 to enable the Secretary of State to issue directions, not to the chief constable, but to the police authority, and the police authority may then have to take those directions into account and act upon them in the way in which it sets performance targets. That is a different matter from the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mr. French), who asked whether the key objectives contained in the plan and the plan itself were mandatory on chief constables or matters to which the chief constable would have to have regard, and the answer I gave him was correct.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that, before giving any directives, he will be obliged by the Bill to consult police authorities, for example, and those whom he considers represent the chief constables of the forces concerned?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is right to stress the importance of consultation, and the Bill requires consultation to take place.

The Bill aims to make clear and to open the way in which chief constables will be held to account. Chief

constables have welcomed the parts of the Bill which give them greater management freedom. I believe that they should also welcome those proposals which enhance their accountability. The principles of greater openness and effective accountability are as important here as they are in other parts of the public sector.

Part I of the Bill also deals with police rank structure and conditions of service. Clauses 6 and 7 have the effect of abolishing two of the present nine police ranks. Clause 6 abolishes the rank of deputy chief constable. Clause 7, which was inserted in another place, would reduce the ranks between inspector and assistant chief constable from three to two.

The purpose of reducing ranks is to provide a less top-heavy management structure within police forces which would allow clearer and more direct communication, put more officers on the front line and enable the best officers to progress more swiftly through the management hierarchy.

The Government originally proposed to achieve that by abolishing three ranks. In considering the concerns which have been expressed about abolishing the ranks of chief inspector and chief superintendent, I have been encouraged by recent evidence of a change of attitude on the part of forces which are already thinning out middle management. Nearly 500 posts at inspector level or above were dropped in 1993, and the latest figures show a further reduction of more than 100 posts being achieved in the first two months of 1994 alone.

The recent decision of the Metropolitan police to cut about 450 posts in the inspecting and superintending ranks demonstrates the momentum behind the process. Other forces are also planning to thin out their management tiers.

In the light of the new evidence, I am now satisfied that it is not necessary for all three ranks to be abolished to achieve our original purpose. In assessing which rank to keep, I have been impressed by the strength of the Association of Chief Police Officers' argument that the rank of chief inspector provides the greatest management and operational flexibility. We intend, therefore, to retain the rank of chief inspector. There will be two ranks between inspector and assistant chief constable as clause 7 would require.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that there is a need to have someone designated as the number two to any chief constable if he should be away at any time? Could not that be achieved perfectly easily without great expense to any force? Without it, I am afraid that there will be a large number of other people wandering around. How does the chief constable lay hands on someone if he is not designated as the number two?

Mr. Howard: I have always recognised that need. It would be perfectly possible to meet it by the chief constable's designation of one of his assistant chief constables as his deputy for that purpose, but it is quite unnecessary to achieve the objective that my hon. Friend identified to have a separate and specific rank of deputy chief constable.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): In the light of the trends to which the Home Secretary has drawn attention—the thinning down of the ranks by chief constables themselves—why has he felt it necessary to minimise or restrict the flexibility of the police authorities and chief constables to take those decisions in the light of local circumstances and to impose a legislative framework?

Mr. Howard: I do not believe for one moment that the effect of the changes that I am making is to reduce the flexibility of chief constables. On the contrary, in many ways their flexibility will be increased. But the decision that I have announced reflects many of their concerns.

Parts I and II of the Bill pave the way for revising the procedures for dealing with police officers whose behaviour or performance fails to come up to police standards. The aim is to reflect best personnel practice in the outside world while taking account of the need to protect officers from malicious or false allegations.

Concerns were expressed about the Bill as it was originally introduced and certain changes were made in another place. Those changes, as they stand, would make it impossible to introduce the new procedures. We would be left with the existing rigid discipline system which does not allow police managers to review an officer's behaviour and performance as a whole, nor to decide what action should be taken in response to a failure to meet proper police standards. That is totally unacceptable.

In particular, I shall invite the House to reverse the amendment introduced in another place which would prevent disciplinary proceedings being brought against an officer in respect of a matter for which he has been tried and acquitted in the criminal courts—the so-called, but wrongly so-called, "double jeopardy" clause. I believe that the arguments in favour of the amendment which were advanced in another place were fundamentally misconceived. I therefore intend to table an amendment to repeal subsections (1) and (2) of section 104 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): There is a parallel between what my right hon. and learned Friend has just suggested and the law of defamation. In the law of defamation it is possible for a defendant to justify a lesser meaning or to defend as fair comment a lesser meaning than perhaps the highest sting on which a plaintiff is suing.

For example, if a police constable were to sue a newspaper which had accused him of being corrupt and guilty of a particular offence, it would still be open to the defendant newspaper to say that, none the less, although it cannot prove that high sting, the plaintiff police officer is still unfit to be a police officer by virtue of other evidence and facts that are proved in the case short of the full sting.

Is not that a parallel which is of use to the police disciplinary system? If a police officer is aquitted of a criminal offence, there may still be findings of fact at the criminal trial which would allow the police service to draw the inference that he was unfit to remain in the police service.

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who draws an extremely interesting parallel from which there is much that we can learn which may well be of relevance to the proceedings that we are discussing at the moment and may well have a good deal of applicability to those proceedings. That is an extremely valuable point.

I am persuaded that police officers should continue to have the right to be legally represented if they are at risk of dismissal, requirement to resign or reduction in rank. Under my proposals, legal representation will still be

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available both on appeal and at the hearing at which a decision to dismiss, to require resignation, or to reduce in rank may be taken.

I shall be seeking to make one further change to those provisions of the Bill that deal with appeals. As the Bill stands, an officer who is dismissed, required to resign or reduced in rank has a right of appeal to a police appeal tribunal.

In order to ensure that the composition of the tribunal continues to reflect the present position and the position under general employment law, I propose to bring forward amendments that would add a former staff association representative as an additional member of the tribunal. He would sit together with a legally qualified chairman, a serving or recently retired chief constable from another force and a member of the police authority for the officer's force. The chairman will have a casting vote in the event of a disagreement. Those changes will, I am confident, enable us to make important and much-needed changes in the area of police personnel management.

Part II contains purely Scottish provisions on the police. It makes various amendments and additions to the Police (Scotland) Act 1967 in pursuit of our policy for reform of the police service that are comparable to those made for England and Wales in part I. Those include provisions to give greater management responsibility to chief constables, provisions on rank structure and conditions of service, and on discipline. The Bill also makes provisions that are relevant only to Scotland. They relate to matters such as the subjects to be included in chief constables' annual reports, and the responsibilities of inspectors of constabulary in Scotland.

Part III of the Bill makes changes to the Police Act (Northern Ireland) 1970 to give effect in Northern Ireland to the Government's decisions on police rank structure and conditions of service. The changes are comparable to those being made in Great Britain to enable greater flexibility in making regulations, while taking account of the special and different circumstances of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

The Government's aim in part IV of the Bill is that magistrates courts should provide an efficient, high-quality and expeditious system of local justice that commands public confidence. We are committed to maintaining both the local nature of the system and the independence from Government of judicial decision making. That requires improvements in the management structure and organisation of the courts service.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howard: If the hon. Gentleman will bear with me for a moment, he may find that I am about to deal with the point that I suspect he has in mind.

The changes will achieve four main objectives. They will guarantee the judicial independence of magistrates and their legal advisers, yield improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of the service, secure maximum co-operation in the management of the service with other parts of the criminal justice system and improve the accountability of the service—both locally and to Parliament.

The day-to-day management of the magistrates courts service remains in the hands of local committees, consisting almost entirely of local magistrates, but the Lord Chancellor is accountable to Parliament for the operation of the service. At present, lines of responsibility both locally and with the Lord Chancellor are inadequate. The Government's proposals, which are based on those published in a White Paper in February 1992, will provide the Lord Chancellor with the minimum level of control over the service consistent with his accountability to Parliament.

Clause 62 will enable the Lord Chancellor to initiate the amalgamation of magistrates courts committee areas. There is at present a power to amalgamate magistrates courts committees, but only where the committees themselves so wish. In fact, no such amalgamations have ever happened. The power provided by the Bill will not be used arbitrarily. It is obvious that an amalgamation will work best if it has the full backing of the local people involved, and local consultations will take place in each case. But we have a duty to consider the best interests of the service as a whole.

Where, for example, some of the smallest committees cannot use their resources as flexibly as larger ones, the opportunity for a higher level of service to the public and improved value for money might make an amalgamation appropriate even where not all local interests agree with such a move.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will my right hon. and learned Friend ask the people who are to consult on those matters to pay more attention to distance in rural areas? The closure of Garstang magistrates court has been universally deplored by all concerned.

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend makes an important point, as usual, and I will certainly draw it to the attention of my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor.

Sir Roger Moate (Faversham): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that many of us are sceptical about the proposition of greater parliamentary accountability over magistrates courts? If a closure is proposed by the magistrates court committee and it is not objected to by the county council, the matter does not come to Parliament and we have no say. Does my right hon. and learned Friend propose to improve on that?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend makes an important point, and I will refer it to my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor and to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, who is seated beside me and who will reply to the debate. I am sure that he will be seized of my hon. Friend's point.

Magistrates courts committees will be restructured so that they can better fulfil their task of providing strategic direction. They will no longer be primarily representative bodies. Instead, members will be chosen for the particular experience or skills that they can bring to that management body.

Committees will be strengthened by a full-time head of staff to take responsibility for the service's day-to-day administration, although always subject to a committee's direction. That head of service, to be known as the justices' chief executive, will be the manager of all the committee's staff. A number of committees have already structured their staffing on that basis, so far as is possible within the existing legislative framework.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: I want to question the Home Secretary on a different point which arises from clause 66. It provides that the Lord Chancellor may give directions to magistrates courts committees so that they can meet specified standards of performance. Some people regard that as the green light to close many rural courts. Will the Home Secretary give me an assurance that that is not the proper interpretation of the clause?

Mr. Howard: Having had the opportunity just a moment ago of refreshing my memory about the precise contents of that clause, I do not think that it contains any justification for the inference that the hon. Gentleman seeks to draw. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department will be able to enlarge on that point when he replies.

Mr. Barry Jones: Will the Secretary of State confirm that I have persuaded him that he and the Lord Chancellor would be unwise to seek to merge two areas—Gwynedd and Clwyd—in terms of the magistrates courts committee? Will he undertake to reconsider that proposal, because on linguistic, cultural and geographical grounds they will not able to do it?

Mr. Howard: My right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor has no proposals to make any such amalgamation. Should the time ever come when he has, I know that he will particularly take into account the hon. Gentleman's representations.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Will the Home Secretary assure me that where, because of the shifting nature of the problem, fine collection in industrial and urban areas becomes a problem the magistrates courts in those areas will not be penalised on an efficiency basis simply because they cannot find the people to collect the fines from?

Mr. Howard: I am quite sure that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, who was listening very carefully to the hon. Gentleman, will ponder at length on its implications and give full weight to its significance before he reaches any decisions on the point raised by the hon. Gentleman.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for giving way before he leaves this phase of his speech. He seems to be saying that our hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary will give some guarantees later. He is, of course, aware of the worry about amalgamation of the magistrates courts committees in the outer London boroughs. He said that my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor is simply seeking a power to amalgamate, but I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will realise that amalgamation of the outer London magistrates courts committees, only 10 years after a complete restructuring following the abolition of the Greater London council, would be very ill timed and ill considered.

Mr. Howard: I am delighted to see such keen anticipation in all quarters of the House of the speech of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department. He is listening extremely carefully to all these points. Indeed, he has told me—I confess that I was not entirely familiar with them before—that negotiations are under way in relation to the outer London boroughs and that they are making excellent progress. I hope that that will give some reassurance to my hon. Friend. No doubt my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary will have more to say on that point, too, in due course.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I broadly support my right hon. and learned Friend's proposals on the future of the magistrates courts, but what are his proposals for the proper cover of stipendiary magistrates throughout the country, because some parts of country, such as Teesside, have very large lay benches and the progress of cases sometimes is inordinately slow, while other parts of the country hardly ever have delays and have an overprovision of stipendiary magistrates? May we have a little more even cover throughout the country, please?

Mr. Howard: I have no proposals to make for the appointment of stipendiary magistrates. I understand, however, that the attitude that the Lord Chancellor takes to the matter is dependent on whether an approach is made by the lay magistrates in the area concerned. If my hon. Friend thinks that that approach needs modification, I am sure that he will address that subject if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The magistrates courts service inspectorate has already been set up; the Bill will place it on a statutory footing. It will also enable the Lord Chancellor to issue in regulations standards of performance that he expects the magistrates courts service to achieve.

Part IV of the Bill deals exclusively with the administrative structure of the service, not with what goes on in the courtroom. But, in the light of fears—which I must say that the Government do not share—that the changes may in some subtle way undermine the independence of the advice given to lay magistrates, there is a declaration on the face of the Bill that in giving advice to magistrates in court, or in exercising the delegated functions of a single justice, justices' clerks may not be subject to direction and will remain utterly independent in those facets of their work.

All parts of the Bill will help crucial public services in the United Kingdom to operate with the benefit of up-to-date thinking about management and public accountability. No organisation can afford to ignore the constant search for more effective ways of getting people to work together to achieve common aims. In the private sector, any organisations that ignore it are likely to go out of business; in the public sector, they ossify and are in danger of becoming self-serving bureaucracies.

The public service reforms introduced over the past decade have all been designed to allow the people who are running the services to get on with the job, free from unnecessary political or bureaucratic interference from outside. But the people running our public services should not dictate what the standards offered by that service should be. All our successful public-service reforms have proceeded on the basis that some person or body outside the service should have a role in setting standards. That is the way to make our public services more efficient and accountable.

The changes being introduced in the Bill will ensure a modern, efficient and accountable police service, better able to tackle crime in the rest of the current decade and into the next century. We believe that the Bill's provisions

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—which are an important part of our strategy to combat crime—will enable both the police service and the magistrates courts to function more effectively.

The Labour party's attitude to the Bill calls for particular attention. For Labour to pose as an ally of the police is rather like Eugene Terre'blanche posing as a friend of Nelson Mandela. For years, Labour local authorities railed against the police; in the House, Labour Members have consistently voted against the measures to strengthen police powers that we have introduced. They called the Criminal Justice Bill unacceptable, and refused to support its passage through Parliament. The police called it "first class", and an essential measure in the fight against crime.

When I made my statement in the House on the Sheehy report, the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) attacked it vigorously; yet on the very same day, in another place, Lord McIntosh—his party's spokesman on home affairs—said that it was

"a very welcome basis for future discussion of the way forward for the police service".—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 28 October 1993; Vol. 549, c.944.]

That evening, on Channel 4 News, the hon. Member for Sedgefield had already started to shift his position: he explicitly supported the decision to abolish the three police ranks. But he had reckoned without Lord McIntosh's ability to change his mind. Within months, Labour was voting against the abolition of the ranks in another place.

The Labour party's attitude to the two Bills is evidence of a party whose commitment to law and order and to supporting the police is poll deep. It simply cannot be trusted to give the police and the fight against crime the unrelenting support that they require. We alone in the House are prepared to give them that support. I commend the Bill to the House.

4.23 pm

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): I thank the Home Secretary for his speech. I felt that it began to come alive when he was attacking the Opposition rather than defending his own measure, but that is not surprising, given that the Bill comes before us in a badly wounded and limping state—severely mauled in the other place, but none the less still dangerous. Thankfully, it has been changed; but it has not been changed nearly enough.

I note that the Government have adopted a new ploy when attempting to justify a measure that has very little support: they make the very claim for it that its opponents cite as the reason for their opposition. Thus, the Bill becomes a measure to reduce political interference and improve local policing, just as the health service reforms become measures to cut bureaucracy. We reached the very height of justification the other day when I heard the junior Minister for the Environment say on the radio that the purpose of the value-added tax on fuel was to assist the elderly in the campaign for a more green, ecologically friendly environment.

The Bill is now presented to us as delivering better local policing. The Home Secretary said today that, where it had been changed, change had occurred through a process of consultation. Let us be very clear about why the legislation has been changed, because that is the only way to secure further changes to it.

In truth, since the moment that the proposals were first spoken about in December 1992, they have come under more sustained attack than any set of proposals virtually in living memory. The attack was renewed every time that the proposals were reissued—which was frequently. I think that I am right in saying that the consultative process yielded no one in support of the proposals, and when the Bill was published nothing from the consultation resulted in changes to the Bill. Not one single change of any substance occurred until the clock was almost striking midnight in the other place and, under pressure of defeat and humiliation, change was announced. It was secured not through a listening Government, but through a scared one.

Although the changes have been numerous—my office estimates that there have been about 23 changes during the passage of the Bill, but we may be underestimating—the legislation remains deeply flawed. The Bill is flawed simply because the thinking and the ethos that underpin it are flawed. With one or two exceptions—such as the proposals about greater flexibility in the financing of police authorities—the Bill represents the most determined and least popular attempt ever made to centralise policing in Britain, to give Ministers unprecedented control over the way that the police do their work, and to undermine police independence. It is driven not just by short-term cost cutting, but by an ideology that resents local freedom and has an aversion, bordering on paranoia, to local government.

That is why the Bill has been opposed, not just by the Labour party or by Labour councillors, but by Conservative councillors; by the police, where the proposals have had the extraordinary effect of uniting almost every rank of serving police officers against them; by magistrates and their clerks, neither group noted revolutionaries in any area; and by virtually all independent commentators. Of course, the Government may dismiss their objections as special pleading, but that is unfair.

The police are prepared to change and adapt—indeed, they have done so in many ways in the past few years. When magistrates are concerned about the independence of their clerks, it is not a vested interest speaking. When they express their concern about amalgamation, they do not speak out simply for their own convenience. They do so because they sincerely hold the view that their independence and, hence, that of the judicial system is being undermined by the proposals.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way. Among his catalogue of criticisms of the Bill, will he tell us about one or two Labour proposals—in particular, the proposal to have elected police authorities, which will do more to politicise those authorities than anything in the Bill?

Mr. Blair: That is not the Labour party's proposal. As I have made absolutely clear in debate, I do not believe that the priority in policing today is about fiddling with the structure of police authorities. It is about getting the right local partnership between police and local communities in order to fight crime. That is what policing is about.

Mr. Howard: The Labour party certainly fought the last general election on a policy of directly elected police authorities. The hon. Gentleman shakes his head, but if he

looks at page 20 of his election manifesto for 1992 he will find a specific commitment to that effect. Will he now tell us when his party's policy changed, if change it has?

Mr. Blair: I have made it absolutely clear all the way through the debate that that is not our policy. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman stopped fighting the Opposition over these proposals and started listening to what is being said, not just by the Opposition but by others, he would find that they got broader agreement.

The opposition that the Bill has aroused has been passionate not because of special pleading but out of a genuine belief that the proposals are not only wrong in themselves but will harm the fight against crime in local communities, and that their effect would be not only a denial of constitutional principle but contrary to the practical ways in which crime can be countered. It is, in other words, literally a counter-productive measure because crime is fought most successfully locally, where police and the local community work together. Every measure that ruptures or weakens that link diminishes our primary purpose which is to fight crime. I now illustrate with reference to the Bill how that occurs.

Let us first consider the composition of police authorities. The original proposals were very much worse —I accept that entirely. Originally, the Home Secretary was to appoint the chairman of a policy authority and a third of its members. That suggestion has now been dropped—it was one of the parts of the Bill that were most savaged in another place—but the size is still to be reduced significantly.

Let us consider also the provisions for the five so-called independent new members. Of course, these provisions are a vast improvement on the original ones, but, although the procedure for determining the new independent members may be an improvement on direct appointments by the Home Secretary, surely the whole process has been cobbled together by someone with an extravagant sense of humour. The way in which the proposals will work is one of the most extraordinary things I have come across.

A panel of selection is to be established in every police authority area to select the independent members. There is a complicated procedure for appointing the panel; it, in turn, has very complicated procedures for deciding who is qualified or disqualified from serving on it. When the panel has, by this means, drawn up a list of 20 people, that list is put to the Home Secretary who then draws up a further set of regulations on how it is to be worked through. He then considers the 20 and reduces the number to about 10 or perhaps fewer. Further complicated regulations follow, and the list then goes back to the police authority to determine who the five independent members should be.

All this extraordinary rigmarole, including special provisions for the Home Secretary to nominate where the numbers on the original list submitted to him are not sufficient, is to secure what? It is to secure the interpolation of people on to the police authority that nobody—not one single independent group of people—has ever said is necessary or wanted.

I pose one simple question. Let us suppose that the Bill had never been thought of and that no word about reforming the police authority had reached the Home Secretary's office at Queen Anne's gate. Let us then suppose that an enthusiastic official had bounded into his room with a procedure of such complexity for reforming policy authorities. What would have happened? Would not that official even now be in a padded cell with his arms stuck behind his back while he was examined by a range of psychoanalysts?

What I have outlined is an extraordinary, expensive and wasteful procedure and it comes from the party of deregulation, from the party which claims to want to cut red tape and undermine bureaucracy; and for what? It is in order to ram through a proposal that no one supports and for which no one has ever asked. The absurdity of the process lies not only in the fact that it will foist on police authorities the duty to select colleagues with whose very existence they disagree; it lies also in the fact that it will undoubtedly reduce local involvement.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Blair: If the hon. Gentleman will listen, I shall explain. The police authority will, in the main, have about 20 or 30 local councillors on it. That figure is to be stripped down to a maximum of nine, which is an enormous reduction in many areas.

Mr. Shersby: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Bill also contains provisions under which the Home Secretary can agree to a larger composition for a police authority, depending on the constituent area that the authority will cover?

Mr. Blair: The hon. Gentleman is right. I read the debates in the other place carefully, and I think that I am right in saying that Earl Ferrers made it clear that that power would rarely be used. We cannot say that, as a matter of course, the Home Secretary intends to expand the number. I do not believe that that is the proposal.

In County Durham, there is a range of different villages in an area, and there are almost 30 councillors on the police authority. It is important to recognise that those councillors, whether they are Conservative or Labour, give local people an input into local policing. Within their areas, those people are certainly more approachable than the average business chief. Considerable concern is shared by the police, never mind local authorities, that the change will weaken the interest and engagement of local people.

Although we have no prospect of achieving it, I must say again that the fact that we still have no proper strategic police authority for our capital city of London represents an omission from the Bill.

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Blair: I must press on for a moment, but—

Mr. Fabricant: On County Durham?

Mr. Blair: On County Durham? I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman on that subject.

Mr. Fabricant: I know County Durham well. It is a beautiful area, and I have stayed in Witton Gilbert.

Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the whole point of the Bill is to give local police authorities greater powers? Does he not also concede that any police authority, like the board of a company, will be more effective if it is smaller rather than larger?

Mr. Blair: May I try to achieve at least the following consensus? If the hon. Gentleman says that the test of the Bill should be whether it gives power to the locality or takes it away, he should follow my argument and see

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whether the new measures give power to local people or to the centre. If, at the end of that argument, he can find it in himself to be reasonable enough to accept the fact that the Bill gives power to the centre rather than to local people, perhaps he will join us in the Lobbies tonight.

The policing objectives are important and it must be understood that there is no objection to chief constables and police authorities setting goals and objectives, or to their producing a local plan. Many, in effect, already do so. The objection is to the wholly unprecedented power that the Secretary of State is taking to overrule local objectives and to insist that national objectives, which he lays down, should be followed instead.

It is important to read those objectives in line with the performance targets that are supposed to be published in accordance with them, in line with the power—which is not wrong in itself—that will direct grants to police authorities in aggregate from now on, and in line with the fact that chief constables will be on short-term contracts. The effect of all those measures together will be, for the first time in our history, substantially to remove local discretion in determining local policing priorities and to replace it with central control.

The hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) spoke about objectives and performance targets. With all due respect, I think that the Home Secretary is not being entirely open with us about the effect of the provisions that he wants us to pass. Although it is correct to say that the police authority merely has to have regard to the national objectives that he will set, the new section 28B that clause 13 would add to the Police Act 1964 makes it clear that the performance targets set in pursuit of the national objectives—contrary to what the right hon. and learned Gentleman said earlier, the two are directly linked—are obligatory. Indeed, under new section 28B(3) the Home Secretary may impose directions, which will also be mandatory, in order that the performance targets set in pursuit of the objectives may be met.

What examples are there of the type of performance targets and objectives that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will set? What will he do? Will he set specific targets, such as specific cuts in burglaries in a particular area? Should forces be told to concentrate on certain types of activity? The concern is not only about those powers, but about how they will link in to the present investigation into what are called the core activities of the police.

The agenda here, however hidden it may be, is that under the Government's proposals the police will become increasingly a law enforcement agency and less of a public service. What of working with local youth projects or old people's homes? How will those activities tie in with the type of objectives and targets that the Home Secretary wishes to impose?

Mr. Howard: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that it is extremely important that there should be no misunderstanding about the provisions, that unnecessary anxiety should not be aroused and that false alarms should not be raised. The position, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman will—on reflection—agree, is this: the new section 28B empowers the Secretary of State to direct that a target should be set in relation to a special objective. The level at which that target should be set is a matter for the police authority. The target is something "to be aimed at". Those are the words in section 28B(1), so there is no question of the force being required to achieve that target on a mandatory basis, regardless of any other problems that the force may face.

It is very important that we should not give any misleading impression of the effects of the legislation. I have set them out as clearly as I can.

Mr. Blair: I am afraid that that does not deal with the point at all. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is simply expressing a matter of obvious common sense—one cannot impose some arbitrary target with an absolute duty to meet it.

Mr. Howard: That is what the hon. Gentleman is saying.

Mr. Blair: That is not what I am saying. It is true that the authorities are merely obliged to aim at the target, but that in itself is important and must inform the nature of their local policing. However, the target is obligatory. What is more, it is backed up by proposals under subsections (2) and (3) of the new section for directions to be given by the Secretary of State for conditions to be imposed under which the performance targets must conform. It is not merely that the performance targets are, as it were, obligatory, but that they may have conditions attached to them under the direction of the Secretary of State.

Mr. Howard *rose—*

Mr. Blair: I will certainly give way again. That is not an objection which is being raised merely by us; it has been raised after careful consideration of the Bill in the other place. Objections are being raised not only by the Opposition parties, but by the police themselves.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman's analysis leaves out of account the fact that the levels are to be set not by the Secretary of State, but by the local police authorities, having regard to local conditions and to their other local priorities. It is perfectly reasonable for the Secretary of State to say that those are matters in respect of which targets should be set. It is for the local police authority to decide on the level at which the target is to be set and it is then for the police authority to aim at achieving that locally set target. That is the important point and if we are to achieve transparently accountable policing, that is an extremely sensible way in which to go about it.

Mr. Blair: I do not think that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is studying carefully exactly what he is legislating. Of course, I am not suggesting that there is some arbitrary level that the authorities, as a matter of absolute obligation, must achieve. To meet the point that was raised earlier, he was suggesting that the objectives of the police authorities that he would set were merely something that they had to take into account, but not follow. In fact, that is not entirely correct, because the authorities are obliged to follow the performance targets that are set in pursuit of those objectives. What is more, under subsection (3), the Secretary of State may give the authorities directions on how they achieve those targets. Therefore, the idea that that does not give him centralised power over policing is absolute nonsense.

Mr. Howard *rose—*

Mr. Blair: May I finish the point? Obviously, the right hon. and learned Gentleman may convince his hon. Friends, with the help of Whips, but the people that he must convince are the police and those outside the House who have constantly raised the matter—and he has refused to give them a proper answer.

Mr. Howard: There is no substance in that at all. If the Bill provided that the Secretary of State could set the levels at which the targets should be aimed, there might be some substance to the criticisms of the hon. Gentleman. However, it is for the local police authority to set the levels. That is an absolutely crucial component of the series of changes. It is a sensible way—there is nothing sinister about it—in which to achieve transparent accountability. I have set out with some precision the sequence of events that will occur. The hon. Gentleman is, I am afraid to say, misrepresenting them.

Mr. Blair: We may prolong the argument for ever, but the right hon. and learned Gentleman is wrong; the performance targets must be aimed at the objectives that he sets. In other words, it is not correct to say that the local policing authorities set their own targets and then merely aim at them. The targets are governed by the objectives. The correlation between the targets and the objectives means that the police are, in effect, following his instructions rather than those of the local policing authorities. No doubt the matter will be considered at length in Committee, but if the Home Secretary desires the authorities to have complete freedom in setting their own performance targets, irrespective of the objectives, he will agree to the amendment that we shall table.

If I may turn to the amalgamation—

Mr. Howard: Of course I will not accept any amendment to that effect, because I think it absolutely right that the Secretary of State should be able to identify the targets; but the levels at which those targets are to be aimed —that is the key point—will be set by the local policing authority. It was very noticeable that, in the hon. Gentleman's most recent summary of his version of the effects of the provisions, he left out all reference to the levels. The levels are critical. I will not accept any amendment along the lines that the hon. Gentleman has advanced, because it would subvert our entire objective of transparent accountability in which the local police authority, which would have the responsibility for setting the levels, would have a key role.

Mr. Blair: With due respect—

Mr. Jim Cunningham (Coventry, South-East): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Blair: I shall give way in a moment, but I should like to press on. The Home Secretary is not dealing with the point that has been made, which is that the objectives that he sets determine the targets. I think that if the right hon. and learned Gentleman reads it carefully, he will find that he is wrong.

In relation to amalgamation, there is the sense—

Mr. Jim Cunningham: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Blair: Yes.

Mr. Cunningham: An interesting point is being raised and the Home Secretary is a little confused. If he knew anything about police authorities, he would know that funding can often determine the level of targets. That is what the Home Secretary is obscuring.

Mr. Blair: My hon. Friend is absolutely right and, if I may say so, he injects a welcome note of practicality into the debate on the construction of the Bill.

The amalgamations are also extremely important. The sense of a hidden agenda is stronger in this area when we encounter the new fast-track procedure for amalgamation. When the Secretary of State announced the consultation in June, he never mentioned the issue of amalgamation of police authorities. In fact, there is an entire chapter devoted to amalgamation in the White Paper, which preceded press reports about the desire to whittle down the number of authorities from 43 to 25 or even fewer. What is absolutely clear from that White Paper is that, although the Government do not intend—for fairly obvious reasons—to press forward with amalgamation now, it is by no means clear that, as soon as the Bill is conveniently out of the way, they will not proceed then. May I simply ask the Home Secretary this: if it is no purpose of his to amalgamate authorities, and if that is not what he desires, why have the new procedure in the Bill? What is the purpose of the streamlining?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): The new procedure is more efficient.

Mr. Blair: The Under-Secretary says that it is all to do with a more efficient procedure. Let us see what the new procedure does. It strips away the public inquiry element of the procedure for amalgamating authorities so that the voice of the people—I need not say of the quiet majority —is not heard. The basic right given to the most minor local property developments is denied in the case of something as important as local policing. It is a disgraceful and anti-democratic measure. If police authorities are to be amalgamated, there is no reason whatever why there should not be a proper public inquiry. Of course, the reason why the Government do not want public inquiries is that they throw up opposition of, usually, a fairly co-ordinated type, which is usually backed up by local newspapers, the regional media and so on.

Exactly the same criticism can be made in respect of the part of the Bill dealing with magistrates courts—a point which my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) will no doubt develop later.

Mr. Maclennan: Lest the hon. Gentleman provide the Home Secretary with an opportunity to represent him as being totally in favour of the status quo, will he acknowledge that when the existing 43 police authorities were created the then Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins, found it perfectly adequate to reduce the number and to involve the public in the process?

Mr. Blair: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. There may well be a case for police authority amalgamations from time to time, but such action should be taken on the basis of local consent and not simply because of a desire to centralise, to push matters further towards central Government.

The magistrates courts procedures are exactly the same. Again, for the first time, we have the possibility of wholesale amalgamation of areas. Conservative Members will be very foolish not to take account of the genuine

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concern in many places, particularly rural areas, at the idea that, as a simple administrative measure, magistrates courts can be pushed together.

I should like to turn now to what remains in the Bill with regard to the Sheehy report. It is still unclear exactly what the changes that the Home Secretary announced last year will amount to, in practical terms, for the average police constable, particularly in relation to matters such as pensions. However, it is clear what they will mean for people in different ranks.

I should like, briefly, to discuss specifically the fairly shabby attempt to persuade the public that these reforms will yield another 3,000 police officers on the beat. That claim has been made frequently. It was the most important justification given by the Home Secretary and other Ministers for part of the Bill, and it was the answer to the criticism of the freeze on police numbers and to the claim that the Bill runs counter to community policing.

Having looked carefully into the matter, we believe that the claim that the Bill will deliver an additional 3,000 officers on the beat is utterly bogus. And so do the police. As can be seen at page 171 of his report, Sheehy anticipated that 3,000 officers might be released to be put on the beat as a result of the changes in rank structure, but only on the basis of the short-term severance package that he outlined. Letters to several of my hon. Friends from serving police officers—in particular, chief superintendents and others—seem to me to suggest that no such severance package has been agreed. Therefore, the idea that all these officers on the beat will be released is erroneous.

Indeed, the matter goes further. I realise that the alteration in rank structure is a difficult area. It is one in respect of which we proceed with care. There is clearly a case for rationalisation of the structure. Let me put to the Home Secretary what must be the test when the matter is being examined in detail in Committee.

First, it is important to understand that rationalisation of the numbers in the ranks of chief inspector and chief superintendent is already taking place. There has been very significant change over the past three years—a reduction of about 300. However, that has been achieved not by a blanket weeding-out of ranks but by case-by-case reorganisation.

It may well be that in some forces not all the ranks are needed or there should be fewer people in a particular rank. However, not all services are the same. There will be exceptional situations in which the senior ranks are necessary—for example, spontaneous public disorder or disasters, where somebody must take charge and where there must be a local chain of command. The danger that has been put to me and will be examined in Committee is that, with the method by which the Home Secretary has chosen to proceed, either there will be no proper control in these situations or there will be an informal procedure by which someone is appointed as a senior superintendent. I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman understands that we are not criticising the objective of streamlining, but are concerned about the inflexibility of the method proposed.

We shall also scrutinise most carefully the changes in disciplinary procedures for serving police officers. Here, too, we must strike a balance. We want to examine the appeal process for officers being disciplined. It cannot be stressed too often that, in what is a monopoly service, disciplinary action will stay with a police officer for his entire career. In some cases—by no means all—the people who make complaints are convicted criminals with serious records. I yield to nobody in my desire to see incompetent, corrupt or abusive police officers weeded out. That is important to the entire police service, which is brought down by such people. However, we must ensure that there is a fair procedure.

In the annual report of every police service this year, there is a recurring theme—the belief that the battle against crime can be, and is being, more successfully prosecuted, coupled with an absolute conviction that emphasis on local policing, in partnership with local communities, is essential to achieving that aim.

Modern policing is about partnership, shared responsibility and a service fully integrated into the life of local communities. Those are not just fine words; they are an essential part of the fight against crime. To fight crime, people must have confidence in their local police. They must be confident not just that the police are fair and honest but that they are approachable and in touch. The police cannot fight crime on their own; the whole community must be enlisted on their side. The law-abiding majority—and, even in the areas with the highest crime levels, the majority are law abiding—must be put back in control of communities. Anything that facilitates the local link between police and people is welcome, and anything that harms it is to be deplored.

The Bill harms that link—not as seriously as it would have done in its original form, but seriously enough. Some of its worst aspects have been neutered, but its fundamental philosophy and purpose remain. I suspect that the Government will not admit to wanting to use many of its powers today, but they may well be used—and used ruthlessly—in the future, if the Bill becomes law.

Let hon. Members just think what the Home Secretary could have done if he had so chosen. He could, for example, have implemented the report of the standing committee on crime prevention—the Morgan report—and won support across the spectrum. He could have saved the millions of pounds that will be wasted through this legislation and used them to undo cuts in the youth service, to provide drugs education, to finance inner-city programmes or to put more police officers on the beat—this time for real rather than in theory. Instead, the right hon. and learned Gentleman is taking the police not just down a diversionary route but in the direction opposite to that in which he should be travelling.

The people of this country do not want a centralised police service, under a Conservative or any other Government.

Mr. Howard: Just a minute ago the hon. Gentleman complained that the redundancy package on the basis of which the middle ranks are being thinned is not sufficiently generous. Now he is accusing us of spending money that should not be spent. The truth is that we are achieving the reduction in the middle ranks without the package that the hon. Gentleman has identified. That is leading to the recruitment of more police constables—452 in the first two months of this year—and that is exactly the objective of our reforms.

Mr. Blair: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is wrong on both points. First, the severance package was crucial to the 3,000 officers to be released. But more important are the Bill's expenditure implications. The cost will run into tens of millions of pounds. I am suggesting that the Home Secretary could have won support for the expenditure of the money that is to be wasted on a Bill wanted by no one on such matters as education for young people about the dangers of drugs—measures that people do want.

The Bill imposes measures of centralisation. Surely there is a terrible irony here. A decade ago, Conservatives alleged that Labour local authorities engaged in political interference. That is the very policy of their flagship today. What they are doing in the Bill is the very thing that they used to decry.

There is another irony. In the report on the Los Angeles riots of a few years ago, Warren Christopher, who is now the United States Secretary of State, referred in glowing terms to the success of British police in pioneering local community policing. As the rest of the world moves towards such policing, the Home Secretary is undermining it at its birthplace.

The Bill is a foolish exercise in mistaken ideology. Indeed, the only reason for its continued existence is not that it is wanted but that no one in government has the political courage to dump it. It will do nothing to fight crime or make our communities safe. It is without support outside Government and without reason inside Government, and it should not be given a Second Reading.

4.59 pm

Sir Anthony Durant (Reading, West): First, I declare an interest: I represent chief superintendents and superintendents in the House.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary rightly said that our police are the best in the world. I entirely agree. Several police officers have travelled to South Africa to give advice on the problems that are being experienced in that country in respect of law and order. It is a great credit to the United Kingdom that the South African authorities asked for those police officers to go and give their advice.

My right hon. and learned Friend has told us that the rank of chief inspector will be retained while the rank of chief superintendent will not. When the Association of Chief Police Officers was asked about the matter, it initially wanted to keep both ranks. The effect of the amendment in the other place was that only one of the two ranks could be kept, and my right hon. and learned Friend decided to retain chief inspectors.

The police have been through a period of great anxiety and great damage has been done to morale during the past few months. There are many worries about the future of the police service. The Sheehy report created mayhem within the police service: I have never known the police in such an anxious state following its publication. I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for reading the report carefully and eliminating many of the nonsensical findings that it contained. I saw Patrick Sheehy, and he tried to convince me that he was right. I had to tell him that the police are a service and not a business; he seemed not to understand that.

The police have been doing much restructuring, of their own volition—that has been taking place for some time. The remaining problems for the superintendents are rank, legal representation and double jeopardy. I shall deal with each of those issues in turn.

Chief superintendents will, of course, be disappointed that their rank is being abolished. They will not be very happy about it. They have given me a list of reasons that they feel support retention of the rank of superintendent. First, the rank is in place and well understood both within the police service—which is within society in general—and among the organisations with which the police interact.

Most forces in England and Wales have been through —or are in the process of or planning—major reorganisation involving considerable reductions in the numbers of superintendents. Indeed, 264 superintendent posts have disappeared. That is a reduction of about 13.3 per cent. The remaining chief superintendents are an essential part of the restructured forces. The retention of chief superintendents will mean a continuation of the operational command structure at senior level, which is essential for running major events such as large public events, major public disorders and large or complex inquiries. The retention of chief superintendents would assist in the devolvement of responsibility from chief constable level while at the same time providing management and command resilience in supporting assistant chief constables, especially during their absence. When senior officers are away, who is in command? That is something that concerns police officers.

The retention of chief superintendents would ease administrative matters when personnel issues such as appraisals and career development, both for superintendents and inspectors, were being dealt with. Their retention would resolve potential difficulties in respect of appraisals and staff management, especially in larger forces.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): As the hon. Gentleman has some knowledge of the area that I represent, he will appreciate the point that I am about to make. I am sure that he knows that the South Yorkshire force is divided into divisions, which are commanded by a chief superintendent. To facilitate local policing, the divisions have seven sub-divisions. My constituency largely forms the appropriate sub-division, as it were, of the South Yorkshire force. The sub-divisions are properly commanded by a superintendent. I believe that we could more easily be managed without chief inspectors than we could without a chief superintendent to command the division.

There are superintendents commanding inspectors in the various divisions. The structure has made for an effective force in south Yorkshire despite some unfortunate comments made by Conservative Members. The Home Secretary's decision to disband or do away with chief superintendents may not help to provide well-structured policing in many parts of the country.

Sir Anthony Durant: That is the point that I am making, which I will continue to make. The retention of chief superintendents would ensure that there are officers to carry out investigations of superintendents in criminal or disciplinary matters. Their retention would considerably ease operational command and management problems that are likely to be experienced by assistant chief constables, especially in larger forces where the number of operational command areas will be large. Some police forces, such as Thames Valley, are extremely large.

[Sir Anthony Durant]

The retention of chief superintendents would provide a higher command level for senior posts in forces where there is shown to be a clear need for such a level—for example, basic command units divisions with large numbers of officers and/or particular socio-economic problems. The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) has made that point for me.

The retention of chief superintendents here would resolve the issue of retaining that rank in the Royal Ulster Constabulary; for some reason, the rank is to be retained in the RUC. I am not against that, but it is odd given that we are to do away with it.

The retention of chief superintendents would assist in resolving concerns expressed by the Police Complaints Authority over the availability of senior officers to carry out major inquiries. Many chief superintendents are heavily involved in such inquiries. A key difficulty with the work that is being carried out by many chief inspectors is that their conditions of service, linked to hourly rates of pay, overtime and other payments, are not appropriate. The agreement reached by the Police Federation with the official side at the police negotiating board has removed that difficulty.

The pay agreement reached for superintendents with the official side of the police negotiating board lends itself to easy accommodation of the rank of chief superintendent, as it clearly allows for posts carrying higher levels of responsibility. In other words, the police pay negotiations may have to return to the drawing board. As I have said, agreements have been arrived at after considerable discussions. It seems that they may have to be examined again. That will cause considerable concern and difficulty within the police service.

It is an essential element of change in any organisation that those people tasked with managing that change are motivated and feel properly recognised and rewarded for their efforts. The morale of superintending ranks is currently extremely low. The pay agreement has gone some way to restoring morale. Retaining chief superintendents would further lift morale and place the organisation in the best position to implement all the major changes that are envisaged.

The Police Federation has no wish to retain the rank of chief inspector—that is on public record—but there has been a consistent argument for the retention of chief superintendents. As I have already said, ACPO argues for the retention of both ranks.

The advent of single-line budgets and national criteria for posts, coupled with police authority and Her Majesty's inspectorate involvement, will result in posts being available only where there is a clear need for them, thus giving the best value for money and a good deal of commonality of structure.

In New Zealand, they did away with the ranks of chief superintendent and chief inspector. That caused great difficulty for the police in New Zealand; as a result, the new post of command superintendent has been created. Effectively, that officer is the senior superintendent: he deals with the command of the various divisions of the New Zealand police force. The name has been changed from chief superintendent to command superintendent but the net result is exactly the same. It was found that doing away with those two ranks caused difficulties within the New Zealand police.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the hon. Gentleman agree with me about what the effect will be if the Bill becomes law—and I hope that it will not? If a chief superintendent retires, the person who takes over his command job will expect to be remunerated accordingly for the more difficult task. Under the Bill, that would not happen. The New Zealand example would apply and chaos would occur in the ranks.

Sir Anthony Durant: The hon. Gentleman is right. In New Zealand, pay had to be increased according to experience and as a reward, so superintendents were on all sorts of pay levels. That also caused difficulties because nobody knew who was in charge. They had to introduce the post of command superintendent so that people knew who was in charge.

On disciplinary matters, I am delighted that the Home Secretary has agreed to legal representation all the way through. That is a great concession. I compliment the Home Secretary on realising the importance of that matter to the police. The hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham), who often deals with the courts, will know that villains often wait until a case is near fruition and then lodge a lot of complaints about the police officer concerned to try to get him taken off the job. Sometimes that happens, and it must be admitted that villains are becoming increasingly sophisticated in these matters.

A matter that still worries chief superintendents, despite some of the Home Secretary's concessions, is the fact that the definition of "unsatisfactory performance" and "misconduct" is still unclear. I urge the Home Secretary to look again at that matter and discuss it with representatives of the different associations.

Once those matters have been resolved, we need a period of calm so that the police can get on with the job. There has been too much alteration, discussion and change. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary said, the police want to get out and deal with the criminals. They welcomed the proposals in the Criminal Justice Bill and felt that the increase in their powers was useful. I hope that the Home Secretary will consider the points that I have made. I realise that he may have made a cast-iron decision but, on behalf of the chief superintendents, I hope that he has not.

5.12 pm

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Certain phrases came to mind when I first read the Bill, which in its original form I found ghastly and in its amended form I find a little less than ghastly. The two phrases were "the Big Brother approach" and "big is beautiful": those seemed to be the themes flowing through the Bill.

The police half of the Bill deals with amalgamations. May I declare an interest as a practising barrister? I remember when amalgamation first began in south Yorkshire. The first amalgamation to take place was of Sheffield and Rotherham, which then became the South Yorkshire force. There was no evidence of increased efficiency as the force grew in size. Sometimes, forces can become too big. One can draw an analogy with the Crown Prosecution Service, which used to have some 40 area services and now has just 13. That created its own

problems. The South Yorkshire force now covers an area that stretches from Sheffield to Hull—a massive area with Lincolnshire included in the middle. Problems inevitably arise. I do not propose to discuss the Crown Prosecution Service this afternoon—simply to draw on the mistakes made in its amalgamation and restructuring policy and to show how the same mistakes are about to be made in the Bill.

By taking away public inquiries, the Bill seems to open the way to amalgamation in both petty sessional and police areas. At the back of some people's minds is the idea that there is a creeping concept of a national police force. If the Bill removes the element of public participation, it removes the safeguard. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House are vaguely worried about the question of a national police force.

Mr. Fabricant: Does the hon. Gentleman recall a recent case in which a high-speed chase took place between Staffordshire and the west midlands in connection with a kidnap in Birmingham? The Staffordshire police were unable to communicate well with the west midlands police because they use different telecommunications equipment and frequencies. Although I do not advocate wholesale amalgamation of different police forces, would the hon. Gentleman not concede that there can be advantages in acquiring police cars or equipment through volume purchases not only in terms of cost but in terms of standardising equipment?

Mr. Bermingham: The hon. Gentleman, whose interventions I always welcome, pays me the compliment of thinking that I know every case that occurs in the country, which I do not. The answer to his question lies in his final remark. Why not simply standardise equipment, thus allowing the Staffordshire police to communicate with the west midlands police? It is incredible that that has not happened, but I take what the hon. Gentleman says to be absolutely correct.

That does not destroy the simple argument that I seek to advance—that when forces begin to be amalgamated, particularly without public participation, we see the worrying feature of a national police force: the more command is taken away from the locality, the more it is distanced from the problems of the locality. That has happened time and again in many areas. For example, as the various hospital services became area health services, command began to disappear. There is an argument in favour of bringing command back to the people. Police officers who know their locality know the problems that exist there. For that reason, removing the question of public inquiries negates the influence of public opinion. In a democracy, public opinion must always play a part in the decisions of government, whether at national or local level.

The second part of the Bill concerns me greatly. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant) for allowing me to intervene in his speech. The reduction in the number of ranks poses a great problem. Again, I draw an analogy with the Crown Prosecution Service. If we reduce the number of chief crown prosecutors, the number of deputy crown prosecutors and, in turn, the number of specialist posts, we begin to create a career blockage.

We have seen what happened when New Zealand tried to remove chief superintendents—it resulted in chaos. Let us be realistic and admit that nobody will do a more difficult job without getting paid for it. If a force has 15 superintendents, one of whom is to replace the chief superintendent who has just retired, the person who will replace him will want to be paid properly. So 14 other superintendents—and perhaps a 15th who may be an inspector doing a superintendent's job—will say that they deserve the appropriate remuneration, and the New Zealand problem will occur. Moreover, the problem of career development will also arise because if a chief constable goes through the ranks of serjeant, inspector, superintendent and then chief constable, he has not made many career steps. So people in the 35-45 age bracket will find that there is nowhere for them to go.

Mr. Howard *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Bermingham: The Home Secretary shakes his head, but that has happened time and again. I have met people in the legal profession and the Crown Prosecution Service who have suddenly found that they have no chance of promotion and nowhere to go.

Mr. Howard: There would be every opportunity for people in that position to obtain posts of greater responsibility—and greater remuneration to reflect it. To achieve greater responsibility or greater remuneration, it is not necessary to be promoted to a particular rank. The hon. Gentleman leaves that out of account.

Mr. Bermingham: The Home Secretary leaves out of account the fact that human beings like their posts to be called what they are. The managing director of a company likes to be called that because, although he is a director, he is also the chap who is the managing director. That is only human nature. What the right hon. and learned Gentleman suggests is that the new scheme, stripped of the ranks that he wants to take away, will still contain posts graded all the way up the scale—they will all be called by the same name, but the increments will remain. That makes the whole exercise an utter waste of time. In a sense, the Home Secretary has conceded that it does not matter what a job is called as long as it carries with it a certain pay packet. In that case, why are we all wasting our time?

I welcome the idea of representation at disciplinary hearings. We practising lawyers are well acquainted with the problem of the malicious complaint—I have seen it time and again. People's careers can be wrecked by the malicious complaint. Some are driven to illness; others have to live with the lurking suspicion that there is no smoke without fire. Removing that from the system will be well worth while.

If I went further, the Home Secretary would accuse me of being a perfectionist. I am a perfectionist: I want anyone accused of anything in any court or disciplinary tribunal to be allowed to choose his or her representative. There is an old saying: "Physician, heal thyself." In other words, a lawyer who acts for himself has a fool for a client. To act for oneself is extraordinarily dangerous; people need an independent, trained mind to present their case. Appearing before a disciplinary tribunal they can rest assured that those who are "prosecuting" have a great deal of experience of prosecuting.

Leaving the police half of the Bill and turning my guns on the Lord Chancellor's half of the Bill, I must tell the Minister who speaks for the Lord Chancellor that he is making the same mistake as his colleague, the Home Secretary. He is adopting the Big Brother approach. The

[Mr. Bermingham]

magistrates courts of this land have worked extremely well for many centuries. Why do we need to interfere with them? What I have already said about amalgamation is equally true here. In parts of Lincolnshire, which I know fairly well, and of the north-west, which I know equally well, local problems which are peculiar to the areas can arise. Amalgamating such areas into bigger ones serving rural communities does not work.

The magistracy is rooted in the populations of the areas that it serves, and that is a good thing. Arbitrary amalgamation of such places runs the risk of creating something that is big and may look beautiful but will not reflect local needs. The Yorkshire-Derbyshire border is a case in point. The local knowledge of magistrates in rural areas around Bakewell and Chatsworth is different from the knowledge that magistrates will need if they operate in Sheffield, an industrial area.

To trespass on happy memories, I might add that, years ago, someone who appeared at Bakewell on a scrap dealing charge got a fine. In Sheffield he risked imprisonment for the same charge. If he appeared in Sheffield for poaching the odd rabbit on the Wentworth estate, not much happened to him; but if he appeared before Bakewell magistrates for pinching a trout out of the river or poaching a pheasant, these were virtually hanging offences.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (Mr. John M. Taylor): Never having poached a ferret myself, may I point out that the hon. Gentleman would be entirely right if he were arguing in favour of amalgamating petty sessional divisional areas —is that what he is talking about?

Mr. Bermingham: The Minister should know what I am talking about—it is his Bill. It has been pointed out already that there has been no amalgamation of petty sessional divisions for some considerable time. And why? Because amalgamation is not needed.

What is the purpose, under clause 63, of allowing the Lord Chancellor to place someone on a magistrates courts committee? Such committees have for years been made up of the magistrates of an area who know the area and the courts in the division. So why must an outsider be brought in? Is the person appointed to report back to the Lord Chancellor? What is his or her function to be?

I was a trifle amazed, when I read clause 68, to learn of the need for a justices' chief executive. What is the point of it all? We are just putting in another bureaucrat. In the old days the clerk to the justice ran his own court and advised his magistrates—he had total independence. Suddenly, a chief executive to the justices rears his or her ugly head.

New section 25(2), in clause 69, stipulates that justices' clerks may be appointed only if the Lord Chancellor says so. For years, magistrates courts committees have been picking their people. Why do they suddenly need vetting? Does Big Brother have to tell us how to do everything? Will we be told that so-and-so is unsuitable because she has the wrong views, or that so-and-so is unsuitable because he is awkward?

Mr. Hardy: Does my hon. Friend think that this development, associated as it seems to be with the system of magistrates being appraised by their fellow magistrates on the bench, means that we are entering a period of uncertainty and complexity which may not be necessary or wise?

Mr. Bermingham: Bluntly speaking, my hon. Friend is right. What was a simple and straightforward system is becoming complicated.

The next little clause presents us with the lovely idea of fixed-term contracts which, of course, are the death knell of independence. The analysis goes: if someone works in industry and performs well, his contract will be renewed. The problem with that is that people in the professions sometimes have to take decisions that other people do not like. A justices' clerk, for the sake of argument, may encounter a rogue magistrate—we all know of such cases —and that rogue magistrate may be a powerful voice on a certain committee. The justices' clerk is on a fixed-term contract—but I note that the Minister is shaking his head.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There is no proposal for magistrates clerks to have fixed-term contracts. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is looking at an old edition of the Bill.

Mr. Bermingham: Perhaps I could have an assurance that there will be no fixed-term contracts for magistrates clerks. I got this copy of the Bill from the Table Office about 20 minutes ago. The committees will have a discretion to introduce such contracts. I should be happy to hear from the Minister that that is wrong.

Mr. Taylor: There will be no fixed-term contracts by virtue of the Bill. The thrust of the Bill is to put authority for magistrates courts in the hands of magistrates courts committees, which will determine the terms of reference of their staff. If they want fixed-term contracts for their chief executives, neither the Lord Chancellor nor I will interfere because we think that that is their province and their right.

Mr. Bermingham: When one goes fishing it is wonderful what one sometimes catches. Here we have it. Some committees will be able to introduce fixed-term contracts. That should not be allowed, and for all the reasons that I have given the Bill should be amended to ensure that it does not happen.

The various rules about the dismissal of magistrates' clerks need to be examined to ensure the independence of those clerks, because that is needed if the system is to run properly. In a magistrates court the independence of the clerk is crucial. His advice often guides the decisions of the magistrates in respect of law. Of course, the magistrates make up their own minds on the facts, and that is the way it has always been. There should be no interference or potential interference or a power to allow—

Mr. Taylor: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bermingham: I wish that I could have finished the sentence, but I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman says that he is anxious to retain the independence of justices' clerks in giving advice to their benches. Clause 71 relates to the independence of the justices' clerk and staff in the context of legal functions. The reassurance that the hon. Gentleman requires is in the Bill.

Mr. Bermingham: The Minister misses the point, which is a problem that can arise when hon. Members intervene before a sentence is complete. I know that clause 71 is about independence and that the Bill appears to allow

independence. The issue I am dealing with is the one that I tickled out—the question of fixed-term contracts. If clause 71 is to be effective, the Bill must state that there cannot be fixed-term or performance-related contracts. That is why I intervened on the Home Secretary and asked whether the difficulty in collecting fines would relate to performance and the performance contract. The right hon. and learned Gentleman did not know the answer and had to be briefed rather quickly. I understand that because I cannot expect the Home Secretary to know all about the Lord Chancellor's Department—any more than I can expect the Lord Chancellor's Department to know all about the Home Office or, for that matter, anything else. The minute we begin to introduce performance-related terms to the justices' clerks or the chief executive—whatever he will do—we begin to interfere with independence. I want that link to be broken.

The Bill contains dangers. The concept that big is beautiful is being promoted, but big can be disastrous, as we have seen in many other areas. There is also promotion of the concept that the state knows best. The Lord Chancellor can put his man or woman into a particular committee and the Home Secretary will have a say in who should or should not serve and how big a committee should be.

The system has its flaws and could be tidied up, but it has worked well. Do we need a Bill that interferes with many parts of a system that has worked well for a long time? Such a measure wastes the time of the House. The real battle ground is in ensuring that police forces have adequate funds and structures to fight crime. That can be done only by detecting criminals. The detection rate over the past 14 years shows that there is much to be desired.

The Home Office would be better employed in ensuring that the equipment and other resources that are necessary to detect criminals are in place than in tinkering with the structures of the police service. Bearing in mind what is happening in the Crown courts and the magistrates courts, the Lord Chancellor's Department would be better employed thinking not about making the Crown court clerks an agency service but about providing adequate clerking in those courts and adequate staffing and money in the magistrates courts. Conservative Members say that that would cost money, but detection and successful prosecutions would become a deterrent and we would not need so many police officers. That would save much money, but that part of the equation does not seem to cross the minds of some Conservative Members. I do not wish the Bill a fair wind: I wish it foul seas.

5.36 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): Thus far, the handling of the Bill has not exactly covered my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary or my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor with glory. I say that in sorrow rather than in anger because I have great respect for both of them. Those responsible for putting the Bill together seem to have been remarkably insensitive to the opinions of those who will be affected by it. After all, it is no small achievement to produce a measure that is greeted by the united opposition of all the police organisations, the Magistrates Association, the justices' clerks and a cross-section of knowledgeable and experienced members —including a particularly distinguished former Home Secretary—of the other place.

After pressure in the other place a number of amendments have been made, but there is scope for considerably more improvement to what is not one Bill but two. Presumably the combination was effected for the convenience of the Government's business managers. I can certainly think of no other reason. The measure deals with two different aspects of law and order, covers two Government Departments and is being dealt with in the House, as in the other place, by two different Ministers.

The task of the police is to maintain order, investigate crime and apprehend suspects. The task of the courts is to hear the evidence, decide on guilt or innocence and, if guilt is found, to impose a sentence within the constraints of the law. The essence of our system is that those are two separate procedures. We have been trying for years to get away from the concept of "police courts". I am afraid that that has been quite unnecessarily undermined by my right hon. and learned Friends between them producing the Bill and creating completely avoidable confusion. However, it is clearly too late to split the Bill, so we have to deal with it as it is.

Some concessions have been made in part I of the Bill, but a number of aspects still concern police officers. Most police officers belong to bodies which have a voice in the House. We have already heard one of them, in the shape of my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant), and I suspect that we shall hear from my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) before the evening is out.

The most senior police officers have no such parliamentary representation; they do not seek it, nor do they feel that they need it, as they have direct access to the Home Secretary himself—on the assumption that he will take heed of their views. I find it sad that some of them found it necessary to approach Members of Parliament because, although they say that their views have been listened to, they do not feel that they have been taken into account.

One proposal which concerns the most senior police officers appears in clause 6. It would abolish both the rank and the office of deputy chief constable. Apparently, an assistant chief constable will not be a deputy chief constable, yet the assistant can be given all the powers and duties of a chief constable in his absence. If that is not a deputy, what is? If he is to be a deputy chief constable, why not call him that and retain the office?

Mr. Fabricant: I wonder on how many occasions a chief constable is absent. If one assumes that it is eight, 10 or 12 weeks in a year, does it make sense to employ someone full time for just 12 weeks' work in a year?

Mr. Sims: I should have thought that 12 weeks represents quite a substantial proportion of the year, but it would vary between chief constables. It seems highly desirable that there should be one specific person who, obviously, will have other duties within the force, but is clearly known and accepted as the deputy to the chief constable.

We have already discussed the concern about the possible abolition of other ranks by regulation. That issue was also fully debated in another place. It is one thing to reduce the numbers in each rank—we heard from my right hon. and learned Friend that that is already happening and is a continuing process—but it is quite another to remove

[Mr. Sims]

certain ranks altogether. It is essential that there should be no possible confusion as to who is the most senior person present and in charge.

The chief constable is operationally independent. Surely he should decide the ranks he needs according to local circumstances and the policing necessary in his area. He should not have a rank structure imposed upon him.

Clause 13 places on the Secretary of State responsibility for setting national objectives for police authorities and performance targets. That worries me on two counts. First, as has already been mentioned, local circumstances clearly differ, and objectives which are appropriate in one area may not be in another. A county may have a spate of car thefts, a city may have a drug problem and a county town may suffer from an outbreak of vandalism. They cannot all work to the same national objectives and performance targets.

Inherent in the proposal seems to be the danger that chief constables will be tempted to move their forces from one task to another simply to improve the figures and meet performance targets, even though it may not be in the best interests of efficient policing or that expected by the local community.

Mr. David Congdon (Croydon, North-East): I have been listening carefully to my hon. Friend's argument. Does he agree that the wide disparity between forces in terms of clear-up rates—between 17 per cent. and 53 per cent. according to the Audit Commission report published in 1993—is proof enough that the Secretary of State is right to include in the Bill measures that enable him to set performance targets?

Mr. Sims: I shall move on to local targets, but I would need persuading that to meet the circumstances my hon. Friend describes it is essential to have national targets because circumstances vary so widely in different parts of the country.

Secondly, targets imply measurable achievements and figures. Much police work is not measurable. To take a simple example, if a couple of officers are sitting in the police station and get an emergency call, they might dash out and apprehend a shop breaker or someone burgling a house. That clearly is measurable, but if those two officers had been patrolling the streets, they may have deterred the potential offenders from committing the offences in the first place. That would have been better policing, but it is not clearly measurable.

All sorts of preventive work are not measurable. I have been particularly impressed by the junior citizen scheme, which has operated in my constituency for successive years. Schoolchildren are taken to a building where various scenarios are set up and their reactions are noted and discussed. For example, they open what they are told is the kitchen door and smoke pours out of it. What do they do? How do they react? They are told to stroll up the road as if they were on their way home from school. A man is lying down on the road asking for help. As soon as one of them goes towards him, the child is grabbed. That scenario is discussed with the children. They decide how they should react. Such schemes are ideal for teaching children responsibility and how to behave in certain circumstances. It is good policing work, but it is not measurable.

The logical next step after performance targets is league tables. I confess that I have reservations about the value of league tables for schools; so often they do not compare like with like. I would have even stronger reservations about league tables for police forces, because conditions can be very different, even in adjacent areas.

A further dimension has already been touched upon. If, under clause 16, the chief constable is on a fixed-term contract with performance pay, how will the existence of league tables influence his judgment? Will he still fulfil an entirely independent role, as is intended?

If there is doubtful merit in having national objectives and performance targets, obviously it is right that there should be local ones, but how they are set is crucial. The obvious method is detailed discussion between the chief constable and the police authority. Since they have operational responsibilities, chief constables would obviously like complete agreement between themselves and the authority. That may be too much to ask, but at present clause 4 requires only that the authority shall "consult" the chief constable, who will have the eventual task of implementing the policy. The Association of Chief Police Officers would like to substitute the words "to have regard" to the views of the chief constable, which does not seem an unreasonable suggestion. Surely any policy is likely to be more successful if the objectives have been reached by agreement rather than imposed. I listened carefully to the exchange between my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), but I think that I am even more confused now than I was before that exchange took place. I hope that the point can be clarified before the debate is completed.

With regard to part IV, the Lord Chancellor has gone a long way to meeting many of the concerns of the magistracy and the justices' clerks, some of which were voiced at a special conference called by them in October, so strong were their concerns, but some still remain.

Under clause 66, the Lord Chancellor can issue directions specifying standards of performance by magistrates courts. Exactly what does that mean? Does it mean that the Lord Chancellor can specify court sizes or the frequency or length of sittings? Again, local circumstances vary and, while it is reasonable to set certain performance objectives after consultation, we must leave it to the local magistrates courts committees to decide how to meet them.

I return to the point raised by a number of hon. Members that under clause 62 the Lord Chancellor can make orders amalgamating magistrates courts committees. It says that he shall do so after consultation, but nevertheless the power is there in the Bill for him to act unilaterally. He can do so on grounds of efficiency, but I do not find in the Bill any specification of efficiency. What are the criteria for efficiency?

My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, will be well aware of the alarm that the existence of that power has provoked in south-east and south-west London among the magistrates and their clerks, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) referred earlier. At one time, there was one magistrates courts committee for south-east London and another for south-west London. In 1986, they were broken up so that there was a magistrates courts committee for each of the London boroughs. That system has worked well. It has been effective and efficient.

But a year or two ago, before the Bill was published, indications were given that the Lord Chancellor was considering steps to amalgamate the magistrates courts committees in south-east and south-west London. I have in my hand a letter from the Lord Chancellor's Department dated 27 July 1993, which says:

"The Lord Chancellor has concluded that Merton magistrates' courts committee area should be amalgamated with Bexley, Bromley, Croydon, Sutton, Kingston upon Thames and Richmond upon Thames"—

in other words, south-east and south-west London.

The letter goes on to say:

"An order of the Lord Chancellor is required to effect the amalgamation. At present such an order can be made only at the request of the magistrates concerned. Primary legislation"—

the Bill before us—

"will be introduced to enable the Lord Chancellor to initiate the order."

There were strong objections to that proposal throughout south-east and south-west London and at the meeting that I mentioned on 9 October the Lord Chancellor was handed a petition signed by 273 justices from south-east London alone. Discussions took place about that conclusion of the Lord Chancellor, including a meeting of a number of my hon. Friends led by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) when we met the Lord Chancellor to convey the concerns that had been put to us.

We had some indication that the Lord Chancellor was prepared to have second thoughts. When I inquired of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary at Question Time on 14 March 1994, he said:

"we are still exploring with the outer London action group the details of its proposals . . . The Lord Chancellor and I are hopeful that it will be possible to find a system that delivers our objectives in restructuring the outer London service but falls short of amalgamating committees. We are working with the service to that end."—[*Official Report*, 14 March 1994; Vol. 239, c. 612.]

It will be extremely helpful if my hon. Friend could say, perhaps when he replies to the debate, what the present state of play is with regard to those discussions, whether a conclusion has been reached or when we can expect some concrete result from the consultations. He will appreciate that at the moment the only thing on record is the letter from the Lord Chancellor's Department stating his conclusions.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I give my word that I shall respond to my hon. Friend in the manner that he requires during my reply. I regard my reply to him in *Hansard* as being very much on the record. I meant that then and I shall have more to say to him later this evening.

Mr. Sims: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. However, I still suggest that, in Committee, clause 62 should be amended to ensure that no order for amalgamation can be made unless it is not only in the interests of efficiency but without detriment to the delivery of local justice.

The Bill has not had an especially happy history so far. I give credit to the Government for at least having made the changes that they have, albeit some of them a little reluctantly. I hope that Ministers will not stop at that point because there is scope for more improvement to the Bill. I shall support the Bill on Second Reading, but, as I said, with a number of reservations, and I hope that by Third Reading I shall have none.

5.56 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) made a remarkable speech, with not one word of which I disagree. Neither his speech nor that of the hon. Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant) can have been music to the ears of Ministers, but they are a valuable reminder of the wisdom of proceeding in matters concerning the police with a strong basis of cross-party agreement.

It is worth reflecting that, before the Police Act 1964, the present basis of Britain's police, there was a wide-ranging debate. There was a royal commission and a debate in Parliament in which the views of all parties were broadly similar. What a contrast with this Bill.

The Bill is the first major attempt for 30 years to reshape policing in Britain. It is unnecessary, it is unwise and it is quite without friends. It was launched by the Government as a flagship, but, following its inspection in another place, it was deemed unseaworthy and subjected to unprecedented amendment. It remains gravely defective and unfit to put to sea.

The police and magistrates courts are the bastions of society against crime and disorder. Few measures could be potentially more damaging to British society than one which undermines the effectiveness and responsiveness of the police and the magistrates courts. The Bill, by its dangerous, centralising purpose, is just such a measure. It was conceived by two senior Ministers—the Home Secretary and the Lord Chancellor. Their common characteristic appears to be remoteness from the good sense of those who make the criminal justice system work. They display a common desire to draw into their hands the power which, under our long-tested constitutional provisions, has been carefully balanced in favour of local policing and local justice. Their only threadbare justification is their express concern to secure greater efficiency. Efficiency is necessary, but centralisation is not necessary to efficiency.

I recall to the Home Secretary the wise words of his predecessor, Mr. Henry Brooke—the father of the present Secretary of State for National Heritage—on Second Reading of the Police Bill, which became the 1964 Act, which is the secure base on which policing has been conducted ever since. Mr. Brooke reminded the House that the Royal Commission on the Police had recommended that the Home Secretary should be made legally responsible for police efficiency, but that all political parties had rejected that recommendation. He said:

"To support such a specific responsibility as the Royal Commission recommended the Home Secretary would need powers of detailed direction which could not, in my view, live along with the continuance of a system of local forces. I see the police service continuing to develop as a partnership between central and local government; not as a service in which local authorities or chief constables act as agents of the Home Secretary."—[*Official Report*, 26 November 1963; Vol. 685, c. 89.]

That careful balance is jeopardised by the Bill.

The most offensive instrument that the Home Secretary has chosen to impose his will on local policing is the power that he will take under clause 13 to determine national policing objectives. That is coupled with the provision in clause 4 requiring that those national objectives be included in policing plans for local areas. To secure their implementation, the Bill provides for performance targets

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to be linked to the attainment of those objectives in local policing plans. To secure police compliance, the pay of senior officers will be performance-related.

There are no advantages in that scheme for the public, the police or the Home Secretary himself. For the public, there will be a blurring of local accountability and a loss of influence over local policing objectives, which could damage the trust between police and public which is so crucial to effective policing. Any perception that the police are pursuing arrest quotas to meet their targets could, for example, breed fear of wrongful or unreasonable arrest. Paradoxically, it could also damage police effectiveness. Criminals will be aware that the police are occupying themselves arresting burglars, for instance, because they are the national target. Criminals may simply turn to car crime in the belief that the backs of the police are turned.

For the police, there will be a loss of flexibility and a diminution in the chief constable's authority. Some targets are already set by the police themselves—for example, response times or measures of satisfaction from surveys of victims and witnesses. The police set and pursue those targets as a means of improving their own service.

Some targets cannot and should not be set—clear-up and arrest rates in particular. There is a world of difference between the work of a police officer in responding to 999 calls and talking to victims and enforcing the law. A police officer's legal powers are, in the words of the 1962 royal commission, original and not delegated. No one—not even the Home Secretary—can lawfully require an officer to arrest anyone.

For the Home Secretary—who is, willy-nilly, establishing league tables of performance—that provision will unleash constant criticism that his national objectives are not those of the nation, still less of the locality. The Home Secretary is already under fire for apparently differing with the Prime Minister over his introductory national targets, in not treating the elimination of drug crime as a national objective.

A virtue of the present tripartite structure of policing is that it recognises the danger to civil society of placing in political hands the extraordinary powers of the police. Police officers alone possess the power of arrest and detention. They intervene in private matters between individuals. They ask questions and can expect answers. They make requests and can expect compliance. They may use force on our behalf. They are ordinary citizens, but they have extraordinary powers.

From time to time, those powers come under strain. In the last decade, for example, during the miners' strike and the violent demonstrations against the poll tax, our policing system remained resilient and ultimately proof against the charge of political motivation. The success of the police and public confidence in their fairness rests on public perception. As Lord Carr of Hedley said in the other place, they are "our police", not "the police".

The second virtue of the present tripartite balance is that it recognises the inappropriateness of trying centrally to measure the effectiveness of particular policing activities. The police are not a commercial organisation whose efficiency can be measured like profits in crimes solved per pound spent. An officer who defuses a punch-up is not a bad officer because he fails to add a few charges to the record. Nor is an officer who comforts a victim a bad officer because she chooses not to join her colleagues in chasing the attacker. An officer who persuades schoolchildren of the dangers of drugs is no less important than the officer who stalks the dealers outside the school. High arrest rates alone do not a good police force make.

The third virtue of the present tripartite system is that it allows chief constables and police authorities to establish their own priorities for the policing of their areas. The 1964 Act gives chief constables, who are appointed by their local police authorities, the legal authority to direct and control the force under their command. The Act also requires police authorities to secure an adequate and efficient force. That creates an identity of interest between the chief constable and police authority.

Controls over policing policy available to police authorities and to the Home Secretary are indirect. The system relies more on influence than legal force to encourage locally managed and locally sensitive policing. I regret that the Home Secretary did not take the opportunity in the Bill to underpin and enhance the effectiveness of local policing, for there are glimmers of sense in some of its proposals.

The concept of a local policing plan is valuable. If it is truly local, it could form a type of contract—a statement of priorities—between the police and public. I welcome the proposal in clause 2 that all police authorities should be established as independent corporate identities. That should avoid another threat to the independence of the police, of which we saw a nasty example in Derbyshire, where the police authority is wholly subordinated to the financial dictates of the local authority.

I also welcome the lifting of the central control of police numbers—the establishment of particular authorities. But there, too, the Home Secretary points in two directions, as he seems hell-bent on following the bad advice of Sir Patrick Sheehy by centrally reducing the number of ranks available to chief constables. Enough has been said about that by the hon. Members for Reading, West and for Chislehurst for me to refrain at this stage from adding my objections. We shall return to the matter of rank in Committee.

Although the Bill is almost wholly unnecessary, the Home Secretary could have used it as a vehicle for reinforcing the effectiveness of local policing by writing into the requirement that the local police plans be published a specific obligation to co-ordinate and promote practical crime prevention measures within its area. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I will seek to amend the Bill to achieve that purpose.

I deal now with part II of the Bill, which deals with Scotland. The structure of the Scottish police is laid down in the Police (Scotland) Act 1967. The Government of the day did not simply make an administrative omission when they failed to run Scotland into the Police Act 1964. They reflected the fact that Scotland has a separate legal and criminal justice system from England which needs, therefore, to be treated separately. Yet the Bill runs the two together as though there were no such difference. The consequence will be that, as with the Criminal Justice Bill recently, Scottish Members will play a limited part in the shaping of the Government's legislation. That is constitutionally unacceptable. It strengthens the case for a Scottish Parliament.

Spliced on to the Bill—the hon. Member for Chislehurst drew attention to the misfortune of these two matters being handled in the same legislation—are the provisions for

managing magistrates courts. They are no more welcome to the magistracy than are the police provisions to the police. It is true that the Lord Chancellor has already met some of the objections, but he has not removed the reasonable concern about future political meddling in the administration of local justice.

The efficiency of the magistrates courts is crucial. Some 80 per cent. of the 2 million people who were prosecuted in England and Wales in 1991 went before a magistrate. The trebling in volume of the cases before the magistrates courts in 50 years has increased the challenge. But the Lord Chancellor has more than a managerial problem. The state of the criminal law itself, uncodified, notwithstanding the recommendations of the Law Commission, contributes to the complexity and length of trials. The Home Office's own figures show that, in 1992, the average number of days from first listing to disposal for indictable offences has risen from 41 days in 1985 to 64. Many of those facing trial will be on bail during that time—many of them still out there committing crimes. The less time that they have to do so, the better.

At the centre of the debate, provoked by the Government's proposals in the Bill, sit the justices' clerks, who are responsible for giving legal advice to the lay magistracy. They are, however, also responsible for the management of the courts. That includes, for example, the scheduling of cases, which has a direct impact on the quality of justice. Here, as with the police, subsidiarity should apply. Those best placed to secure the efficient management of courts within a locality are the courts themselves, acting in concert through the magistrates courts committees. Justices' clerks hold their posts at the pleasure of the courts committees and it seems natural that they should be answerable to them, and them alone, for the efficiency with which they discharge their duties.

Yet the Lord Chancellor will, through the Bill, be able to involve himself in these local matters. He will be able to appoint two of his friends, who need not be magistrates, to every local committee. The courts committees are to be subject to performance objectives and targets set by the Lord Chancellor. He is also to acquire for himself the unlimited power to amalgamate court areas without any legal duty to justify his reasoning or pay regard to the views of those involved. That level of intervention is unacceptable. There needs to be a new constitutional settlement to protect the independence of the judiciary and secure the greater accountability of responsible Ministers for the management of their budgets for the criminal justice system. The Lord Chancellor in particular has an anomalous role as the head of the judiciary and a partisan member of the Cabinet. The functions must be separated.

I accept that the Minister who speaks in this House for the Lord Chancellor is right. He has a third function. But it is not one that impinges directly on the administration of justice and the independence of the judiciary. Those functions of the Lord Chancellor should be separated. A Minister of Justice in the Commons should be appointed to secure the proper administration of the criminal justice system and take charge of the enactment of a modern codified criminal law. The present Lord Chancellor, who, in some respects, is less political than most, has shown himself to be surprisingly insensitive to the dangers in the duality of his role.

To my mind, the Bill embodies a dangerous tendency —that the public will see their local police forces and magistrates courts drifting out of their reach. Yet local policing is good policing, and local justice is also where justice is best done. To centralise in the manner proposed is wrong in conception and would be damaging in practice. We shall oppose it.

6.16 pm

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): I applaud my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and his team for the many new initiatives that they are taking to reverse the rise in crime, which is threatening the very quality of the daily lives of our constituents—and, of course, I welcome the fall in recorded crime which was announced last week.

After 14 continuous years of extra funding for the police, the Government are now right to pause and consider how better value for money can be obtained from existing resources through improved police structures and organisation. When a chief constable admits that the scenes of 60 per cent. of burglaries in his area have not been visited, yet police manpower is used to crack down on car licence dodgers, it must be right to review police priorities.

I mean in no way to criticise our police forces. The increase in police manpower since 1979 of 16,600—an average of 1 per cent. a year—lags a long way behind the rise in crime during that period. Our police have been running ever faster just to stand still, frustrated by ever-increasing paperwork, the apparent leniency of the courts and the perceived inadequacy of the law, particularly towards young offenders.

I pay tribute to the local police in Dorset, where crime fell and the rate of detection rose last year. Despite that, serious crimes of violence and robbery rose by 10 per cent., officers were shot and wounded on the streets of our conurbation and, for the first time, IRA terrorism threatened residents and holidaymakers during the height of our holiday season last summer. Yet the new Liberal Democrat-controlled Dorset county council was prepared to reduce our police budget, by £500,000, and police manpower. What utter irresponsibility.

I echo the welcome given by my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant) to the way in which my right hon. and learned Friend has responded to the concerns expressed by the police about some of the recommendations of the Sheehy report. They are far happier about those recommendations now.

Mr. Shersby: I am aware that Dorset's local authorities have reduced the police budget by half a million pounds. Can my hon. Friend give us some idea of the likely impact of that on the security of his constituents?

Mr. Atkinson: I assure my hon. Friend that, although the local authorities were prepared to reduce police resources by that amount so that they could be spent elsewhere, my constituents and those of other Conservative Members did not allow them to get away with it.

I welcome the streamlining of the composition of police authorities, and the amendments introduced by my right hon. and learned Friend to allow chairmen and the majority of representatives to be elected by authorities. I must say that I have not been impressed by the input of local democracy in the present authorities, whose response to local needs and demands seems most frequently to be yet more calls for more police on the beat. Unlike my right hon. and learned Friend, they do not give much thought to the more efficient use of existing manpower and resources.

[Mr. Atkinson]

The new smaller, stronger authorities will have a greater commitment to achieving locally the targets and objectives that the Home Secretary will set nationally, on the advice of and in consultation with chief constables. But—I hope that I do not misunderstand the Bill's proposals—the chief constable, not the police authority, must ultimately be personally responsible for both the planning and the undertaking of operational matters. I look forward to hearing an assurance to that effect from my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department.

I look to the new authorities to pursue bolder initiatives in creating safer public areas—for instance, the installation of video cameras, and the injection of new life and direction in our neighbourhood watch schemes. I hope that they will build on the excellent "crimeline" confidential information services in newspapers such as the *Bournemouth Advertiser*, which is published in my area. Such schemes do very good work in requesting the public to come forward with the confidential information that the police need in order to track down criminals.

Mr. Fabricant: Is my hon. Friend aware that some 90,000 neighbourhood watch schemes have been set up in the United Kingdom? Should we not congratulate citizens on taking responsibility into their own hands and working alongside the police?

Mr. Atkinson: I have news for my hon. Friend: if he checks the facts, he will find that 115,000 neighbourhood watch schemes have been set up.

My hon. Friend is right to point out that those schemes are making a major contribution to the combating of crime in our communities. It must be said, however, that there remain too many unsecured homes that constitute a soft touch for the burglar, especially the homes of vulnerable elderly people living alone.

I am very surprised that insurance companies do not encourage the installation of continental-style shutters: such shutters, which are widespread in Europe, strike me as the best protection available for domestic property. Surely burglar alarms and shutters should be standard on all new premises, just as alarms are now standard in all new motor cars.

Once again, the Government have responded positively to the fear of magistrates courts that their judicial independence might be threatened. My local magistrates courts committee in Dorset is much happier now that the terms of employment of its justices clerk and the appointment of its chairman remain at its discretion, although it is still anxious for the work of the proposed courts inspectorate—which would be appointed by the Lord Chancellor—to be seen to be wholly independent of his Department in the making of recommendations. I hope that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary will clarify the grey area between judicial functions and administration.

My local committee is also concerned about the possibility that, if boroughs such as mine in Bournemouth and neighbouring Christchurch revert to their former county of Hampshire—I understand that both authorities will submit proposals to that effect to the Local Government Boundary Commission—the new magistrates court committee area that might result will no longer coincide with the area and boundaries of the police and probation authorities. That would make liaison between them much more difficult. I hope that my hon. Friend will respond to that point as well.

Finally, let me repeat a complaint that I have made in the House many times before—on behalf of my constituents and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill), other hon. Members representing party conference towns, and their police authorities. It concerns the continuing extra financial burden imposed on council tax payers by the cost of making our national leaders secure at their annual party conferences. The complaint was most recently made just a couple of weeks ago by the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mrs. Maddock), in an attempt to amend the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill. Although she made her complaint to the right Ministers, I thought that she was seeking to amend the wrong Bill: this is the Bill that deals with police funding. Anyway, her amendment was negatived.

I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will allow our right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State to receive a group representing all three of the county councils involved—Dorset, Sussex and Lancashire—as requested by my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West in his letter of 30 March.

Our principal argument remains that the 1984 Brighton bomb tragedy made this a national issue whose costs should be borne entirely by the nation. As I said earlier, last summer the IRA targeted Bournemouth—my constituency—for the first time. Fortunately, there were no casualties, but the incident brought it home to us that we on the mainland are also on the front line in the war against terrorism.

What thought has been given to supplementing police manpower with troops from our armed services to man the security zones that are now a feature of all major party conferences? That would reduce both the number of police required—which includes police from other counties, at overtime rates of pay—and the cost to the council tax payer. It is one of the proposals that I wish to put to my right hon. and noble Friend when we meet him.

I warmly welcome a Bill that, together with the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, has already done much to allay our constituents' fears that not enough is being done to combat crime. I look forward to safer communities, and a reduction in crime that will restore the confidence of those constituents.

6.27 pm

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): It did not occur to me that the Home Secretary possessed a touch of comic genius until I heard him in Home Office Questions the other day. When congratulated on the comprehensive nature of his retreat on the Bill, he said:

> "The changes that have been made to the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill are changes of detail. The principles are intact, and they will deliver us the objectives that we have always sought to achieve."—[*Official Report*, 10 March 1994; Vol. 239, c. 387.]

Yet what is happening today? Every time that issues of principle are raised, we are told, "Ah, those have been resolved. They are no longer issues of principle; they have been taken care of. Some of the detail remains, but there is nothing to worry about." I prefer the remarks of the noble Lord, the Earl Ferrers, who, when the Bill left the other place, said:

"Your Lordships were good enough to explain your anxieties . . . in a manner which even the most, shall I say, dim-witted Minister could not fail to understand."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 24 March 1994; Vol. 553, c. 796.]

It is well to remember for a moment the sense of outrage that the Bill occasioned when it first surfaced. Other hon. Members have referred to the way in which other organisations responded to the Bill. They responded in that way because people who understood and were involved in this area sensed that something of major constitutional importance was taking place.

A whole tradition of running the police and the local constabulary—enshrined in the Municipal Corporations Act 1835, the Police Act 1964 and the Local Government Act 1888—was endangered by what the Government proposed and the way in which they proposed it.

As has been said, in 1964 there was a royal commission and three years of the most detailed inquiry and discussion about the proper arrangements for policing. But none of that took place in this case; it was not thought necessary.

In the Bill, we also have the quite illegitimate amalgamation of the police and the magistracy. Given the inappropriate amalgamations that are consequential to the Bill, perhaps that is a rather telling kind of amalgamation.

There is something quite uncanny about the range and variety of opposition that this measure has called forth. Even a Government who managed, in the same week, to alienate both the Royal British Legion and Dame Vera Lynn still have to be admired for their ability to alienate at the same time every organisation concerned with policing and the magistracy.

As we consider the Bill, it is well to remember what was said by those who understand these things when the Bill arrived in the other place. The Lord Chief Justice, Lord Taylor—it was quite exceptional for the Lord Chief Justice to talk in this way—said:

"A cult seems to have developed and to be invading the whole of the public sector whereby fixed-term contracts and performance pay are seen as the panaceas which will give us managerial efficiency. They may indeed be useful tools in a purely managerial context, but in a judicial context, or where there exists a judicial element, they can have no place."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 18 January 1994; Vol. 551, c. 476.]

Perhaps we might refer to the remarks of a couple of former Conservative Home Secretaries. Viscount Whitelaw talked about a "major change" in the "whole history" of policing in this country and called it a "very dangerous move indeed". Lord Carr said:

"If I were still Home Secretary today, I would not accept the offer of powers of this kind. I would resign rather than accept them".—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 18 January 1994; Vol. 551, c. 491.]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I clarify for the hon. Gentleman that it is not in order to make direct quotations from Members of another place unless they are quotations from a Minister. That applies only to quotations in this Session. I am not quite sure whether the hon. Gentleman was making indirect or direct quotations, but I make that point.

Dr. Wright: I am grateful to you for making that point, Madam Deputy Speaker. Fortunately, I have traversed so far in the wrong direction that it is now irremediable; but I understand and accept what you say.

Against those words that were never spoken, I should like to celebrate—as we all should—the House of Lords. Perhaps it is most appropriate for someone on this side of the House to say that. Let us be quite honest: if this monstrous Bill had started in this place and been driven through in the way that Bills are driven through the House, it would now be inflicted upon the police and the magistracy of this country.

It is all very well for hon. Members opposite to celebrate the changes that have taken place. Having noted their behaviour in relation to everything that comes before the House, I am fairly certain that they would not be so robust if the original version of the Bill were before us now. So let us celebrate the House of Lords, because it certainly deserves to be celebrated.

Upon the Bill leaving the House of Lords after Third Reading, the unanimous view of the noble Lords was—I shall not quote directly—that this Bill, which they had done something to save and insert some sanity into, was still unsatisfactory, and that measures still had to be taken to make it more workable. I refer particularly to the central unsatisfactory element of what remains: the proposals relating to the constitution of police authorities.

I hope that it is quite inconceivable that the constitution of a police authority of such Byzantine complexity could ever leave the House in the way that it has entered it. That would do the most terrible damage to an efficient and effective police force and to its status in the local community.

I will not quote him directly, but the noble Lord Harris of Greenwich—who was responsible for the amendment that saved us from the original horror of the Bill in relation to the constitution of police authorities, and landed us with the Byzantine mess that we have now—said of the Bill as it left the other place that that was the price we had to pay for damage limitation. But let us hope that we can still sort it out further down the road.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): In view of the horror that the hon. Gentleman expresses about the present proposals, what would he say if he were faced with a proposal to have a police authority whose members were all appointed by a Secretary of State?

Dr. Wright: Although I do not want to be totally diverted by that intervention, the resentment and antipathy felt on this side of the water about the extension of appointed government in place of elected government is felt doubly in the north of Ireland.

Let us think for a moment about why the complexity of these police authorities is so undesirable and unworkable. We have an extraordinarily elaborate and cumbersome procedure which is guaranteed to alienate at least 10 people —those who are the rejects from the Home Secretary's cull. We have no idea what will happen about casual vacancies. In every respect, the procedure is not sustainable. Whatever else the Committee stage of the Bill achieves, I hope that it brings forward a proposal which is at least workable, because the present proposal is not.

There was a much more sensible way in which to proceed. I speak as someone who was, and is, very keen on trying to reconstitute police authorities in new and interesting ways. The germ of progress in this area is to be found in the White Paper itself, which says:

"The membership will not be confined to those who have been able to go into local government or to sit on the bench."

I agree with that sentiment. For a number of years, I have wanted to explore new ways of reconstituting police

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authorities—rooted in their local authorities and anchored in their local communities, but bringing in far more people to represent the diverse strands of local communities.

Starting with that germ of a good idea, all that the Government had to do was allow the local committees to become more genuinely representative of the community. The Government could even have had the option to specify the categories of people they wanted on the authorities, as they have done with every other kind of public body. That was the way forward, but the Government failed to take it, which is why we have this mess.

We have this mess because we suffer from the disease of "ministerialitis"—ministerial fingerprints have to be put on everything that moves. That is the contemporary curse that afflicts the Bill, as it afflicts so many other pieces of legislation introduced by the Government. In fact, there are two curses, and perhaps I may spend a little time on each.

Earlier today, someone said that the Bill was a microcosm, or perhaps a further extension, of the Government's public service reforms. In some ways it is, and in some ways it is not. Perhaps the two ways in which it is and the two ways in which it is particularly dangerous are due to the fact that it suffers from the curse of centralism and from the curse of managerialism, a managerialism that was born in the private sector, a philosophy which it was believed could simply and easily be translated into public services. Both approaches are misguided, and both are the source of error in the Bill.

In this context, centralism means another instalment of the patronage state. There are about 20,000 or 25,000 elected councillors across the country, but already about 60,000 people have been appointed directly by Ministers to run public bodies and public services. Indeed, the new magistracy, as those people have been described, often have no local roots; they are certainly not elected; and they lack any organic connection with the local community in which they are appointed.

The only way in which Ministers know how to respond to the organisation of public services is to wonder how they can appoint some of their own people to run them. We have seen how that works under the present Home Secretary. When he wanted to appoint a prison ombudsman, a number of distinguished candidates presented themselves. A short list was assembled—I shall not embarrass the people involved by naming them, but they were all very distinguished people. The problem was that none of them was politically acceptable to the Home Secretary, so we had to wait and wait, until, rather like waiting for the puff of smoke in the Vatican, a retired admiral was found last week.

Of course, there is nothing wrong with retired admirals but the irony is that the choice took so long and many were rejected before the Home Secretary could find someone who was politically acceptable for that post. That is an example of centralism, amalgamation and "the Minister knows best", which is why he is alienating every constituency in sight.

I could not even begin to recount the feelings of magistrates in Staffordshire, who are now being told that the Lord Chancellor has decided that they should be amalgamated with the magistrates in Warwickshire. When I asked the Lord Chancellor how that could happen, and suggested that it would be unhelpful to the magistracy in Staffordshire, I received an extraordinary letter from his representative on earth, who said that the problem was that the Warwickshire magistracy was so inefficient that his Department wished to amalgamate it with the Staffordshire magistracy. That is profoundly insulting to Warwickshire and Staffordshire magistrates.

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): Would my hon. Friend let me have a copy of that letter, because I am sure that magistrates in Warwickshire, many of whom are Conservative councillors, would be interested to know what the Lord Chancellor and his representative on earth think of them?

Mr. John M. Taylor: While he is about it, perhaps the hon. Gentleman could let me have a copy, too.

Dr. Wright: I am rather alarmed to discover that the earthly representative does not even remember the exchange, because it was thought to be one of particular interest, significance and danger to the magistrates in my constituency and my county.

Mr. Maclennan: Does the hon. Gentleman think it possible that the Lord Chancellor, who spends more time north of the border than south of it, relies on Shakespeare's account of the magistrates of Warwickshire, and has in mind Justice Shallow?

Dr. Wright: I am sure that that is an excellent intervention, if only I could understand it. I move quickly on.

One of the curses of this wretched Bill is that of centralism and patronage. I should like to pass on to the House a sentence that I came across only the other day. It comes from what I think is the only detailed book to be written about ministerial patronage in Britain. It was written 30 years ago, by someone called Richards, and contains the following sentence:

> "At present the abuses are not grave due to adequate ethical standards in the conduct of public business . . . Perhaps the greatest danger for the future is the possibility that one party will exercise uninterrupted power for too long a period."

That is a very prescient remark from a rather grey academic, who thought that, on the whole, the way in which patronage worked was acceptable, but that the danger would occur when Ministers thought that they were the state and began to appoint their own people in a partisan way to every public body they controlled. That is precisely what has happened; it is precisely what underpins the Bill; and it is precisely why people are so antagonistic towards it.

Mr. Fabricant: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who is my near neighbour, for giving way. Will he concede that patronage is sometimes confused with public service? He will know that, in Cannock as well as in Lichfield, it is the Conservative—not Labour—members of local associations who play an active role in the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and in the Women's Royal Volunteer Service. They do so not because of patronage but for reasons of public service.

Dr. Wright: I am grateful for that neighbourly intervention, but I fear that the hon. Gentleman makes my point rather than his. The tradition of disinterested public service, which was often not about political parties, has been corrupted by the partisan abuse of patronage. I hope that all hon. Members will recognise that danger, because

it is a House of Commons matter; and it will still be a House of Commons matter when shadow Ministers become Ministers.

The second curse underpinning the Bill is the translation of a managerial business philosophy to a service for which it is entirely inappropriate. It is a microcosm of a tendency towards public service "reform"; it is the move to a contract culture, the setting aside of traditions of professionalism, of trust and of local and political accountability and their replacement with short-term contracts, performance-related pay, performance indicators, audits, targets and chief executives. In a sense, all that is contained in the Bill, which is why it is a microcosm of the trend towards public service changes.

I ask hon. Members to reflect on a statement that is all the more remarkable because it comes from an accountant. In *The Independent* last week, the Coopers and Lybrand fellow at the London School of Economics, who has just written an interesting pamphlet for the think tank Demos, wrote:

"According to opinion poll evidence, politicians and accountants are distrusted far more than professionals. In practice, much of the audit explosion has involved a very distrusted group—politicians—using an only slightly less distrusted group—accountants—to tighten control over groups which still enjoy relatively high public esteem, such as doctors and police."

I ask hon. Members to reflect on that wise remark, especially as it came from an accountant, and to reflect on whether the introduction of such measures enhances the standing and the legitimacy of public services or erodes them.

One has only to ask whether the fact that the chief executive of the Child Support Agency earns performance-related pay enhances the legitimacy of the agency or erodes it. The answer is perfectly clear. In so far as we extend the same principles across the public services as a whole, the same results will follow. Those principles are wholly inappropriate for police and magistrates.

I recently spent a Friday night on patrol with the Cannock sub-division of Staffordshire police, going from incident to incident. We went to a domestic violence dispute, which was intelligently sorted out, and then to a fracas at a public house, which was magnificently sorted out. We went to a car that had been broken into, and then dealt with the people who had suffered that fate. Possibly none of those incidents would have figured in any kind of performance tables or targeting that one could have devised for the police force, but they were all examples of intelligent, prudent and humane policing of the kind that sustains local people and local communities.

My closing theme is the translation of a business ethic into public services, whose reductio ad absurdum is to be found in clause 23, headed:

"Acceptance of gifts and loans",

which says:

"The terms on which gifts or loans are accepted . . . may include terms providing for the commercial sponsorship of any activity of the police authority or of the police force maintained by it."

What an extraordinary statement. We have only to think what it might mean. Will there be police cars sponsored by Group 4, all the better to get away in?

Mr. Fabricant: The hon. Gentleman will be aware of SPACE—Staffordshire Activity and Community Enterprise—which is designed to keep young people busy in the summer. I have been to Alton Towers with the young people on the scheme, as doubtless he has, too. The Staffordshire police would certainly welcome sponsorship for that admirable scheme, which other police forces should also operate.

Dr. Wright: Excellent community schemes such as the SPACE scheme are exactly the sort of activity that will suffer if we go down a certain route on reward and performance in the police service. That is not my view alone; the police themselves say that. Having spent a good deal of time with the Staffordshire police, and having discussed the Bill with them, I should be happy to relay in private some of the more robust sentiments that police officers expressed about it.

We could have cars sponsored by Group 4, and uniforms by Kwik-Fit. After all, Kwik-Fit fitters are the quickest, and that would be consistent with performance-related pay and target hitting. And at the moment of arrest, there could be a new way of putting things: "This arrest comes with the sponsorship of Bloggs and Bloggs, your friendly local solicitors, who will be glad to do you a service any time you like."

There we see the future—the translation of that philosophy to a core public service. Perhaps the best final comment comes from Sir John Smith, the deputy commissioner of the Metropolitan police, who is also president of the Association of Chief Police Officers. He may also be the man who arrested me about 20 years ago, but I am not entirely sure about that. Writing for the Fabian Society, Sir John Smith recently said:

"We must never lose sight of the fact that the police service is a public service, indeed a social service in the widest sense. It operates with the consent of the community it serves and can never be run or evaluated on purely commercial lines. There are qualitative aspects to public policing that can only be assessed subjectively and not by productivity measures alone. Its fate must never be left to be decided solely by market forces".

I hope that the authority of that remark gives it some credence, even with Conservative Members.

As I have said, there are considerable difficulties and dangers associated with the Bill. But there is a different model available—a model that builds on the old tripartite tradition but extends it into local communities; a model that treats the police as a local public service, and builds on all the considerable changes that the police service has achieved in the past 10 years or so.

That model builds on the principles enunciated by Lord Scarman in his 1981 report—the

"two well known principles of policing a free society",

one of which he called "consent and balance" and the other "independence and accountability". The sad thing is that we—or rather the Government, in the Bill's approach to the organisation of policing—have lost sight of those principles.

The community will be strong if the police are strong, but equally the police will be strong if the community is strong. If we are serious about dealing with the factors that lead to the erosion of communities and the disintegration of our society, we must be serious about doing all we can to re-establish some living, real, authentic meaning to that notion of community.

It is interesting that, when the House passes legislation, at the end of each Bill we have to say how much it will cost, both in financial terms and in manpower terms. I suggest that we should have a third category. We should have to say how much each Bill will cost in community terms. Ultimately, it is our ability to renew our

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communities that constitutes our ability to renew our society. The Bill forgets that. At best it is an irrelevance, and at worst a dangerous irrelevance.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Before I call the next hon. Member to speak, may I point out that a number of hon. Members wish to speak, and that speeches will have to be a little shorter if many of them are not to be disappointed.

6.58 pm

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): As the House knows, I am a parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation of England and Wales and I wish to declare that interest.

The Bill is the most significant police Bill since Parliament passed the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, 10 years ago. I had always hoped that such a Bill would be the result of the deliberations of a royal commission. For some years, I have pressed Home Secretaries of the day to set up another royal commission. I think that the last one was the Willink Royal Commission of more than 30 years ago. Royal commissions have not been in vogue very much in the past few years, although we have had a splendid Royal Commission on Criminal Justice, which reflects great credit on those who served on it. However, the Bill is the result of the thinking of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and his colleagues in the Home Office and we must consider it as it stands.

I am especially glad that the Bill was introduced in another place, because that is a revising Chamber. Those who serve with great distinction in another place have the opportunity to bring their considerable experience of such matters to bear on legislation. The House of Commons may reflect that no fewer than four previous Home Secretaries were able to offer their advice, as well as a number of other senior and distinguished Members of the House of Lords.

The Bill contains proposals for far-reaching changes in the organisation of police forces, for the establishment of new, free-standing police authorities and for the composition of those authorities. I welcome the aspect of those free-standing police authorities which confers on chief constables and members of the police authorities much more local decision making on how public money is spent on the policing of the country. It will be for those chief constables, in consultation and co-operation with their police authorities, to decide how public money is spent, to determine priorities, to decide whether money is to be spent on computers or vehicles and where the priorities lie in manpower. All those powers are being delegated.

I welcome that change, as do a large number of senior and junior police officers, because they feel—as I feel—that those decisions should be taken locally and not in the Home Office. Whatever the controversy surrounding that decision, it is basically right to delegate to the police authorities and to the chief constables the decisions for determining priorities. I want us to get away from the endless wrangling about police establishments. It should be decided locally. Having said that, we all know that police authority budgets will not be open ended. They will be capped, but within that capping there will be considerable opportunities for flexibility in determining priorities.

The new police authorities will not be elected police authorities of the kind which were talked of a few years ago and which, as we have heard today from the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), are no longer the policy of Her Majesty's Opposition.

We are considering a new kind of free-standing police authority, which, it has been determined after much debate in another place, shall have a membership of 17. Nine of the members will be local councillors who will reflect the balance of the parties, for the time being, on the council or councils that appoint those councillors to the police authority. That means that the councillors appointed will not only be from one political party, but will reflect the membership of the council or councils concerned. So, even in local authority areas where one party or another dominates—as we all know, there are a number—there will be opportunities for local councillors representing minority parties to serve on their local police authority. That is absolutely right. There will be three magistrates and, as we also heard, five members who will be co-opted by the councillors and the magistrates from a list to be supplied by the Home Secretary.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield had a good deal of fun in his speech while describing the rather convoluted manner in which those individuals are to be co-opted. Of course, that formula emerged from debates in another place. Although I must say that I agree that it is a little convoluted, I still do not think that it is too complex or that it will prevent local councillors and magistrates from having a good deal of choice about whom they co-opt. Above all, they will have the right to elect their own chairman, which is very important.

What sort of people will the Home Secretary be looking for when he prepares his list? It would be interesting to hear a little about that from my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary in his winding-up speech, if he has a moment or two, because there are many people in the community who would come forward to serve on police authorities. As I thought I heard one of my hon. Friends say a few moments ago, there will be a lot more admirals about in months to come. That may well be so. I have a close connection in my constituency with the Royal Air Force and I can think of one or two suitable senior RAF officers. They have valuable experience and would be able to contribute meaningfully towards the operation of the police authorities. However, I am not for a moment suggesting that membership should be confined to ex-service men or women.

One aspect of the Bill which is of special interest to me as an hon. Member who represents a London constituency —as I look around the Chamber, I do not think that there are any other hon. Members here who represent London—

Sir Anthony Durant: One has just left.

Mr. Shersby: One of my hon. Friends has just left.

May I say a word or two about the proposed Metropolitan Police Advisory Committee, which is not referred to in the Bill, but which, as has been made clear by the Home Secretary, will be set up? As I understand the position, it will not be a police authority of the kind referred to in the Bill, but it will be simply an advisory

committee of about 10 or 12 individuals who will advise the Home Secretary in his capacity as the police authority for the Metropolitan police area. They will, to a large extent, replace the advice that the Home Secretary receives from the civil servants in the Home Office.

Bearing in mind the fact that the police advisory committee will be set up by administrative means rather than by legislation, it would be appropriate if the House knew something about it, about the kind of people to be appointed, about the extent to which it will be required, if at all, to set any local objectives and the extent to which it will be subject to any directives, performance targets or other directions of any kind by the Home Secretary.

Londoners do not want a police authority of the kind proposed for other parts of the country, for several powerful reasons. The Metropolitan police are uniquely responsible for the area covering the seat of government; they are responsible for diplomatic and royalty protection and other unique aspects of policing that do not apply elsewhere in the country. Nevertheless, I think that the setting up of the committee is of interest to the House and is certainly of interest to every hon. Member representing a London constituency. I should like to know more about it.

The Bill gives the police authorities the powers to set local policing objectives after consulting the chief constable. There has been a certain amount of misunderstanding about that proposal among officers in various parts of the country. In his speech this afternoon, the Home Secretary went some way towards trying to clear that up.

I want to refer again to one or two aspects of this matter, as it is vital that they be crystal clear. Police authorities, in setting local policing objectives, must have regard to any objectives set by the Home Secretary of the day and to any code of practice that he may issue or any direction that he may make. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary said that this would not change the operational responsibilities of the chief police officers concerned. I was very glad to hear that. It is vital that chief officers should be operationally responsible for what their members do. We saw this during the miners' strike, and, as the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) pointed out, it occurred again during the poll tax disturbances in London not very long ago. The operational independence of chief constables must be maintained, and the relationship between a chief constable, his local police authority and the Home Secretary must be clear beyond any shadow of doubt.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have been listening carefully to my hon. Friend. No doubt he welcomes the fact that clause 5 reproduces a provision of the Police Act, which states:

"The police force . . . shall be under the direction and control of the chief constable".

Mr. Shersby: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. I welcome that very much indeed. In a sense, there is a slight contradiction between that provision and the current Bill, which requires the chief constable to take account of targets set by local police authorities. I hope very much that my hon. Friend will make it clear beyond peradventure that local police officers will have a powerful input to the published police plan. That plan will be the basis for policing of the area, and it must be clear that both the members of the police authority and the chief constable have agreed to it—that it is not being imposed.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. Immediately after the words to which the Minister has referred there is the following provision:

"In discharging his functions, every chief constable shall have regard to the local policing plan issued by the police authority".

Mr. Shersby: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who, like myself, is a parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation. That is the point that I am drawing to my hon. Friend's attention. I hope that it can be cleared up during the Committee stage.

There is an aspect of this matter about which I was not going to speak, but which ought to be mentioned. I refer to the fact that, in future, chief police officers will be on short-term agreements. One can envisage a chief police officer on a short-term agreement—a person with perhaps quite a number of years to go before he or she might expect to retire—feeling under pressure from the local police authority to accept and adopt certain targets. As human beings, such people must be concerned about their careers. I hope very much that nothing in the Bill will put a chief police officer under pressure to accept or be party to local targets about which he or she might otherwise feel unenthusiastic.

I turn now to a totally different subject—the proposal to change the arrangements for the amalgamation of police forces. These arrangements, which are contained in clause 12, will enable my right hon. and learned Friend to carry through a major reorganisation of the police service—something that would be of very considerable interest to the population of the area concerned. We have heard today that my right hon. and learned Friend has no immediate plans to carry forward any such major reorganisation. However, legislators know that once a law is on the statute book it can be used at any time.

Clause 12 will enable the Home Secretary of the day to alter police areas by order and to inform the police authorities and the local authorities of his intentions. I am sure that he will want to take account of their views, but that is all he will have to do. This proposal replaces the present arrangements under which a local public inquiry is held. As the change that my right hon. and learned Friend seeks is so substantial, it would be helpful to the House if he were to make clear his medium and long-term intentions with regard to any question concerning reorganisation of the police service.

The next matter with which I want to deal is a happier one for me. I compliment my right hon. and learned Friend for demonstrating once again that he is a listening Home Secretary. In recent weeks, he has been subjected to a certain amount of unjustifiable media criticism for being prepared to change legislative proposals as they proceed through the House and through another place. I do not share that criticism. The mark of a good man or a good woman is that he or she is prepared to listen to expert advice and, if convinced by the arguments, to make changes. I welcome very much my right hon. and learned Friend's announcement that police officers involved in discipline cases will continue to have the benefit of legal advice at hearings.

There is a history to this proposition. In 1984, the House advised the then Home Secretary, Sir Leon Brittan, that this benefit should be accorded to police officers. When its removal was proposed in the Bill, I took a few modest steps and asked my right hon. and learned Friend to reconsider the matter, as did the Police Federation and the other staff

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associations. My right hon. and learned Friend has demonstrated his understanding of the unique nature of police disciplinary procedure by his announcement today that police officers will continue to have the benefit of a barrister at hearings.

My right hon. and learned Friend has accepted that police officers are exposed to a unique degree of hazard by way of allegations, many of them false, from the criminal fraternity. At such a hearing, the officer's whole livelihood is on the line. If he is found guilty he loses his job and will be unable to get another in virtually any occupation. In my judgment, it is absolutely right that he should have proper legal representation. Therefore, my right hon. and learned Friend deserves a large bouquet not just from the police but from the House for his wise, sensible and humane decision.

I should like to mention one or two other matters of police discipline. The Police Federation accepts that it would be unreasonable for a tribunal to be convened for just any appeal. However, where a punishment as severe as, say, a fine amounting to a week's wages or more is involved, an aggrieved officer should be able to appeal outside the service. At present, fines are limited to 13 days' pay for each offence, but, even in the case of a constable, that can amount to approximately £700 in respect of each offence. The Bill as it stands does not provide for the appeals tribunal to include a former member of the appropriate police staff association. That is why I was so glad when, this afternoon, the Home Secretary again demonstrated that he has listened to the Police Federation and to the Superintendents' Association, as well as to my right hon. and hon. Friends, by announcing that the tribunal will have a fourth member who is a retired police officer, probably of senior rank. That is important. I suggest that someone who is not a retired police officer might be reluctant to overturn a decision of his serving colleagues. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has been extremely wise and has listened.

It is proposed that a police appellant must pay the whole of his or her costs unless the police tribunal directs otherwise. That is a reversal of the present position. If the proposal is implemented, I believe that it will discourage officers who have been dismissed, or required to resign or reduced in rank, who have suffered a severe financial penalty, from appealing to the police appeals tribunal. I hope that during the passage of the Bill my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will again be in the excellent listening mode which I have described, and will be persuaded to accept the point of view that I have outlined. Many officers would be unable to afford the cost of an appeal. That could have a serious effect on the confidence of the police in the discipline system.

My right hon. and learned Friend has announced that he intends to retain the rank of chief inspector. The Police Federation will want seriously to consider that. The decision is something of a disappointment to the federation. Its evidence to the Sheehy committee rather supported the abolition of the rank. Knowing the federation as I do, I am sure that it will consider my right hon. and learned Friend's view with its customary fortitude and will have regard to the arguments that he advanced in support of his view.

I am sure that my concluding remarks will be of particular interest to the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng), who takes such an interest in all my speeches. I have always firmly believed that the police service is a fine public service. I believe also that it should remain a public service. I say that in all sincerity. That does not mean, however, that the service should not have the benefit of good management procedures. It should not be insulated from the developments in management techniques that occur throughout society in general. Some of the proposals of my right hon. and learned Friend will be beneficial to the police service nationally.

I return to my fundamental point: our police provide the best police service in the world. I want to see it stay that way. As the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland said, the Bill contains certain provisions that could lead to important changes being made, notably in the setting up of new free-standing police authorities, which, as they develop over the years, will be of benefit to the police and to the people that they serve—the men and women of this country.

7.23 pm

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): I welcome the fact that the Bill extends to Northern Ireland and deals with matters that would normally be covered by Orders in Council. My colleagues and I welcome the fact that there is to be proper legislation on an important subject. However, the Bill extends to Northern Ireland only in a couple of clauses which could be described as taking up Sheehy-type matters.

The Bill does not deal in Northern Ireland terms with two important areas of the constitution—police authorities and police discipline. Indeed, those matters are still subject to consultation in Northern Ireland. A paper on police discipline was published last year and we are still awaiting a Government decision. As for police structures relating to police authorities, a consultation paper has been produced and the consultation period will expire at the end of May.

Sir Anthony Durant: Consultation is still continuing on disciplinary matters in England.

Mr. Trimble: Indeed. We in Northern Ireland, however, have not had the benefit of the provisions that are set out in the Bill and the benefit of the Home Secretary's statement today.

I am especially concerned about consultation on police authorities because the period for consultation, as I have said, expires towards the end of May. That holds open the possibility—it is one that concerns me—that new clauses may be introduced towards the end of the Bill's Committee stage that relate to a Northern Ireland police authority.

In principle, we welcome the approach that such matters should be the subject of a Bill and not of an Order in Council, but I must caution the Government against introducing new clauses at the tail end of consideration of the Bill in Committee in circumstances which would not give us the opportunity properly to debate them. It should be remembered that the Bill has already completed its passage through another place.

I hope that the Minister who responds to the debate will make a statement on the Government's approach to matters that are still the subject of consultation in Northern Ireland. Do the Government have any intention of introducing new clauses in Committee, or even on Report, to extend certain provisions to Northern Ireland?

It is rather paradoxical that there are provisions in the Bill to change police authorities in England and Wales, which will move them slightly in the direction to which we moved in Northern Ireland. That will be done by introducing appointed members where there is central Government influence bearing on the persons to be appointed. It will move the authorities in England and Wales a little towards the model in Northern Ireland, where the entire police authority is appointed by Government —by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

The move is paradoxical because in Northern Ireland the police—the Northern Ireland Police Federation, the police authority and other persons—would like to see the Northern Ireland model move towards the old English model. They would like to have a police authority that is representative of local government rather than one which is appointed. It is ironic that we wish to proceed towards the old English model when the English model is moving towards us.

We used to have a position rather similar to the one that obtained in London, where there was no police authority. That situation was criticised heavily by the Hunt report in 1969, and changed by the ensuing Northern Ireland legislation.

My colleagues and I support the existence of a tripartite system of the chief constable, the police authority and the Secretary of State. We recognise that accountability, policy and control over the police are complex matters. The police must first discharge their duties under the law. The operational requirements of any particular situation are for them to judge. There is, however, difficulty and uncertainty about where operational matters end and policy matters begin, in so far as the law allows scope for policy. As for policy, there is a national interest and a local interest. It is right that there is both.

I am speaking of matters that come within what has been described as a grey area, one which has related to the pressures and personalities of any particular situation. For the first time, as far as I am aware, the Government are legislating in an area which in the past has not been the subject of legislation. There have been no express provisions. Instead, there has been an interplay of different forces and variations from one situation to another. The Bill reflects an attempt to legislate in that grey area, and that carries dangers with it. There is the danger of inflexibility, apart from anything else.

We do not disagree with the general thrust of the policy that is set out in the Bill. It is right that there should be scope for a national policy input. We do not find it objectionable that some members of a police authority should be other than local councillors. Such persons can represent special areas of expertise or help to round out, as it were, the balance of a police authority. As I have said, we do not find that objectionable in principle. The detail is something that can be discussed. It is important that there is a tripartite system that enables there to be a balance and diffusion of power.

Objectives and targets have been discussed at length, but we must wait and see how they work out in practice. They must be realistic and responsible, and set according to the responsibilities of those concerned. They should not interfere with operational matters, which chief constables or police authorities should decide, but should be contained in a policing plan. It is good that an opportunity exists to set such objectives.

The Secretary of State recently published a consultation paper entitled "Policing in the Community: Policing Structures in Northern Ireland" on the setting of objectives by the Secretary of State and the police authority. I was unhappy to find, in paragraph 5.10, that

"any differences between . . . the Authority's objectives and those of the Secretary of State, will need to be resolved by the Secretary of State."

The setting of objectives by the police authority is undermined if the Secretary of State can override those objectives. The consultation paper goes on to say:

"If the Secretary of State is unable to accept any objective proposed by the Police Authority, he will be required by law to give the Police Authority reasons for his decisions."

If those current proposals of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland are put into effect, we shall have no police authority in Northern Ireland. Rather, we shall have a body like that to which the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) referred for the metropolitan area—a metropolitan area advisory committee. It is significant that the Northern Ireland Office consultation paper concludes that the police authority in Northern Ireland should be renamed the Police Commission. The title "Police Advisory Committee" may be more accurate if those proposals are carried out.

A few months ago, the Northern Ireland Office proposed to abolish the police authority entirely. At least it has stepped back a little from that, although it is trying to neuter the police authority in other ways. We disagree with that. A substantial police authority should be assimilated as far as possible to the Great Britain model. We do not want to be left in the same position as another jurisdiction in the British Isles, the Republic of Ireland, where there is no police authority whatever but extensive political control over policing. The Garda has called for years for the creation of a police authority, but that has been denied.

The unfortunate consequences of that are brought to mind strongly by reading the communique issued yesterday by the Anglo-Irish intergovernmental conference. I shall quote a sentence that is interesting given that it comes from a diplomatic document of an intergovernmental conference. Referring to policing, it says:

"Particular matters covered"—

they are covered by two Governments discussing an internal affair within the United Kingdom—

"included the building works at the combined RUC Station and army base at Crossmaglen; recent reports published by HM Inspector of Constabulary concerning the Royal Ulster Constabulary, and by the Independent Commission for Police Complaints, as well as the consultation paper on Policing in the Community issued by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland; policy issues regarding use of lethal force, noting the recent judgment by Lord Chief Justice Hutton in the Clegg case; and forthcoming parades."

It would hardly be considered appropriate for a police authority to consider such detail, yet an intergovernmental conference has discussed such detailed matters of policing. That gets dangerously close to political control. That would be dubious if it were done by a country's own Government, but the fact that a foreign Government is engaged in such an activity is deeply offensive.

The Northern Ireland Office's arguments against a police authority for Northern Ireland being assimilated to the British model are invalid. First, it argues that we cannot operate on the general British model because, in real terms, there is no local government in Northern Ireland. The simple answer is to create some. In the meantime, persons appointed to the police authority could be nominated to a

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more representative body in a more representative manner by outside interested parties. That should happen across the spectrum, including the political spectrum.

Secondly, it argues that, unlike in England and Wales, finance in Northern Ireland is provided exclusively by the Northern Ireland Office rather than by local government. That argument does not hold water either because English local government finances come largely from central Government. Given that clause 15 provides for the Home Secretary to pay grants to police authorities, I see no reason why a similar clause should not provide for the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to pay a grant to a Northern Ireland police authority. It is important that finance be routed through the police authority because power and control often follow finance.

I agree entirely with the Home Secretary's announcement about discipline, particularly with regard to legal representation and the double jeopardy rule. Although that is not popular with policemen, there is more to being fit to be a policeman than being acquitted of criminal offences. A person may be acquitted yet still not be fit and proper or of sufficient character to be a member of the police force. Therefore, although I understand the police resentment, I understand the reasons for the provision.

Clauses 59 and 60 relate to Northern Ireland and deal with Sheehy-type matters. We welcome, in clause 59, the deletion of Treasury concurrence in the making of regulations. I hope that that will lead to a more liberal approach to such matters. Clause 59(3) deals with the making of regulations with the consent of various persons. Who are the persons referred to in that clause?

Clause 60 provides for regulations on full-time reservists of the RUC. We hope that that power will be used to rectify an injustice that has lasted for the past 25 years—that of the pension rights of full-time reserve constables in the RUC. It is a scandal that people who, in many cases, were asked 20 years ago to become full-time reservists and gave up other occupations to serve the community at considerable physical risk are now left without a pension. After years of service, they must draw unemployment benefit or income support while waiting for an inadequate state pension, and they have no opportunity to obtain other employment because, once they have left the RUC, they become unemployable.

Two years ago, at the conference of the Northern Ireland Police Federation, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland promised that that injustice would be rectified. Last year, he had to apologise to the conference that he had not yet managed to do so. I advise him to do so before going to the next conference, otherwise strong opinions may be expressed to him.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Bill provides an opportunity to table new clauses that will allow us to debate the Government's repugnant privatisation of the police at the Northern Ireland national airport? That discriminates against Northern Ireland because its airport will have the only privatised airport police in the United Kingdom. Privatisation of police at Gatwick or Heathrow would be unacceptable. Will the hon. Gentleman and his party explore the question whether we could debate in Committee a new clause that would restore the police at the Northern Ireland airport to public ownership and control?

Mr. Trimble: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his keen interest in Northern Ireland matters generally and in this particular issue. One of the great advantages of proper legislation, as opposed to Orders in Council, is that it provides opportunities for further debate and for tabling new clauses as a way of exploring issues. I am delighted to have that opportunity on this occasion.

I wish to end by reminding the Government that I want to know whether they have any intention of tabling new clauses to implement any of the provisions described in the consultation papers to which I have referred.

7.39 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): It is always a pleasure and a privilege to follow the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), especially in debates on law and order. He always poignantly reminds us of the law and order issues in Ulster which should be at the forefront of our minds, given all the tragedies that the people of Ulster have experienced for far too long.

I see that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department has temporarily left the Chamber to speak to his officials—*[Interruption.]*—but now that he has returned I should like to tell him what a joy it is to see him on the Front Bench for this debate. I thank him for responding so favourably to all the representations which I and many others have made to him about the magistrates courts parts of the Bill. I want, however, to ask him to keep an open mind on the subject of lords lieutenant. I should like them to remain as ex officio members of magistrates courts—but I shall write to my hon. Friend again about that.

Hon. Members have rightly concentrated on the police aspects of the Bill, which, after all, can seldom have been so much in the news. Sad to say, much of today's press comment on our police is critical, focusing as it does on police involvement in miscarriages of justice, on possibly poor detection rates and on the fact that there may be too few police officers on our streets. There is also a suspicion that some of the retirements on grounds of ill health have taken place to avoid disciplinary action.

As a result of these and other matters, public confidence in our police is not what it was; I dare say it is not what many right hon. and hon. Members and I would like it to be. The truth is, however, that the public has never had greater cause to be thankful to our police. The demands of policing a modern society are intense, and there is a continual threat of violence. I make no apology for raising the subject of violence again—indeed, I am rather surprised that no one has mentioned it thus far. It is a serious problem that we must bear in mind when we consider the subject of police resources and the number of officers there should be on our streets.

Only yesterday Sergeant Gary Boughen had his face battered in a grave and tragic attack by young thugs outside a fish-and-chip shop in west Yorkshire. He was merely attempting to quieten down some rowdy behaviour. I hope, Madam Deputy Speaker, that it is in order to hold up this photograph—I am indebted to the *Yorkshire Post* for it—to show hon. Members the scene. Plenty of other copies are available in the Tea Room and in the Library; hon. Members may want to look at them just to remind themselves of what can happen to a police officer at any time of day or night in any town, city or village in this country.

What is the solution, and why is this issue so important to the Bill? The Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill introduces tougher penalties for young thugs. This Bill underwent a great deal of change in the other place, but I hope that their Lordships will be more charitable to the proposals in the criminal justice Bill. They certainly command the support of Conservative Members and the general public alike.

Those Bills in themselves do not represent the complete answer; nor does telling the parents of young thugs that they should have more responsibility for them. If a police sergeant is attacked in the way I have described while trying to deal with rowdy behaviour, only two conclusions are possible: either he will not go in on future occasions —hardly a realistic proposition—or there will have to be more than one police officer. If three or four had gone in, I do not believe that the youngsters would have reacted as they did. We just do not have enough police officers to deal with incidents of this kind in rural areas. Three or four at a time, in the mobiles that we sometimes see in town centres, may prove necessary.

The crucial issue for the House is whether this Bill will deliver more police officers to patrol our streets. That is what the public want, and in the end it will be the acid test. I say, not grudgingly but with enthusiasm, that the Government deserve credit for the fact that, in the past 14 or 15 years, we have acquired the best-paid police force in Europe. But that has contributed to the problem that we do not have as many officers as we might like—

Mr. John M. Taylor: I thank my hon. Friend for the gracious words at the beginning of his speech. May I point out to him that, in the first two months of this year alone, 452 more police constables joined the force?

Mr. Greenway: I was coming to some of the improvements that have taken place even before this Bill is enacted. My hon. Friend anticipates me. I wanted first to refer to the fact that recruitment of special constables is playing an invaluable part in putting more police on our streets, especially late in the evening and at weekends. But that, too, is not the whole answer.

We must also consider the equipment that our police have. Today my right hon. and learned Friend talked of serious structural problems in the funding of police capital expenditure. If I remember rightly, he referred to information technology. We need to co-ordinate and speed up its introduction throughout the police force.

Police authorities have been reluctant to fund common police services. You, Madam Deputy Speaker, will remember the inquiries that the Home Affairs Select Committee has undertaken over the years. National initiatives in this area do not happen as speedily—if they happen at all—as they should, because of this reluctance. The fact that the national criminal intelligence service arrangements are so far behind schedule proves my point.

The Minister's intervention just now leads me to the point that there have been a considerable number of efficiency improvements in the force already, particularly since the Sheehy inquiry was launched. No one should say that Sheehy did not bring about some benefits. At least it made everyone sit up and ask what they should be doing. Many of us may have disagreed with many of its conclusions, but the atmosphere that it created—unhelpful in the sense that it affected morale—had the long-term benefit of helping to ensure a better use of resources. That, as the Minister reminded us, is putting more police officers on the streets.

This, too, is still not the complete answer. We have to face the fact that the present tripartite system is not delivering the resources required: it needs reform. This Bill introduces that much needed reform. None of the three parties to the present arrangements has overall responsibility. The mechanisms for funding provide no guarantees. For example, the Home Office and the Treasury control Government expenditure through the authorised establishments and, of course, through capital expenditure controls. Those controls have become increasingly nonsensical in the past two or three years, affecting the purchase of fairly inexpensive items, and they have caused havoc in the funding of police vehicle fleets. As the Home Secretary said, that is now acknowledged.

The Government can also influence expenditure through the standard spending assessment and their capping powers, but there is no guarantee that the local authority will spend up to its SSA, and that has caused problems in some police forces. We heard in the debate how some local authorities have to be publicly shamed into making sure that they spend up to their SSA. This is one of the key points about the Bill's funding arrangements, and it has not been addressed in the debate. Clause 26(1) provides:

"The power of the Secretary of State to give directions under section 28D of the 1964 Act to a police authority established under section 3 of that Act shall include power to direct the authority that the amount of its budget requirement for any financial year . . . shall not be less than an amount specified in the direction."

That could be called a centralising power, but it provides the one guarantee that is essential to ensuring that the police know what their budget will be and that it will not be subject to the whim of local politicians. That is important.

The cash limit of Government funding will require the Government to state clearly what they think the minimum budget should be. The Government percentage of the budget will be 51 per cent. of X. One does not have to be brilliant at algebra to know that, if 51 per cent. is £100 million, £198 million is needed to fund a police force's authorised expenditure. For the life of me I cannot understand why there has been such opposition to that proposal because it makes Government support for the police service extremely transparent, and that is what is required.

Other matters need to be addressed. One problem that has not been solved, even post Sheehy, is the funding of pensions. In the North Yorkshire force alone, whose total yearly budget is about £50 million, in the 10 months from December 1992 to September 1993 no less than £4.4 million was paid in lump sums to retiring officers, most of whom were retiring on the ground of ill health. In the past couple of years such payments have rendered many police authorities unable to recruit up to their authorised establishments.

North Yorkshire has a fine record of supporting the police through the local authority and making sure that there are as many policemen on the streets as the authorised establishment will allow, but such pay-outs have made a huge hole in the budget. According to today's issue of the *Yorkshire Post*, the chief constable of West Yorkshire has threatened officers who have retired on the ground of ill health that if they recover they will be asked to go back into

[Mr. Greenway]

uniform on the streets or have their pension stopped. That may be a rather graphic description of precisely what the chief constable intends, but a Select Committee on Home Affairs inquiry into police sickness found that, sadly, too many officers who retired on the ground of ill health did so in circumstances that gave rise to some concern about the authenticity of the sickness. It will do no harm to ensure that the position of officers who recover is reconsidered.

The Bill is about funding and the Government should be robust on the use of the precept. When the Government have established by an examination of their cash-limited grant what the budget ought to be, Ministers should not underestimate the public's willingness to pay a specific precept for the police. Those of us who ask our constituents at the weekend, "What would you be prepared to spend a bit more money on directly?" receive the reply, "More police officers." That is certainly the reply in my constituency, and the result of following it up could be quite dramatic.

North Yorkshire has about 500,000 charge payers and a police establishment of 1,400 officers. If each charge payer contributed an additional £10 a year precept, it would raise £5 million. Police officers are paid about £25,000, so that money would provide another 200 policemen on our streets. I am highlighting, perhaps in an over-simplistic way, the fact that a little extra directed at employing more police constables and sergeants could have a dramatic effect on manpower and the ability of the police to fight crime.

The Home Secretary made announcements on three matters that were overhangs from the other place. I agree with all three of his decisions. It is crucial that officers are represented throughout the disciplinary process, not least because police officers, more than anyone else in the public service, run the risk of mischievous and malicious allegations. Sadly, that happens all too often. The second issue is double jeopardy. When I was a police officer in the west end in the 1960s two officers were charged with living on immoral earnings. If my memory serves me correctly, they were found not guilty but the evidence adduced in court was so strong that I do not think that any other police officer would have wanted to serve with them ever again. Even if there is evidence to show that people are unfit to be police officers, it does not necessarily follow that the burden would be sufficient to meet the standard of criminal proof that would enable them to be convicted in court.

My right hon. and learned Friend has made the right decision on the issue of ranks by saying that the rank of chief inspector should be retained. Much has been said about the need to ensure that officers on the ground need to know who is the senior officer. In the great majority of cases the senior officer will be a chief inspector, not a chief superintendent, and that is the rank that can be disposed of.

Another issue relates to the rank of deputy chief constable. It is fascinating that the Bill goes so much with the grain of what is happening in the police service. Almost two years ago North Yorkshire abolished the rank of deputy chief constable because it was felt that the money could be better spent on providing more policemen on the streets. Armageddon has not hit the administration of the North Yorkshire police force. I suspect that its chief constable and two assistants have to work more hours and a bit harder than they did when the chief constable had a deputy, but the decision not to have a deputy chief constable is generally regarded as a great success.

In conclusion, I want to refer to what has been said this afternoon and evening about police relations with local communities and the need for them to be strengthened. I do not accept that the police authority has anything to do with that. Police and local community relations are being strengthened through the liaison panels set up under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and through the divisional command structure that police forces are operating.

The Metropolitan police—a huge police force covering an enormous area—has some of the best local policing schemes in the country, such as the domestic violence unit in Islington and the racial attacks unit in Plumstead, which are extremely effective.

I do not believe that the police authority issue affects the relationship between the local community and its police force. In any event, that would not be possible in a huge county such as north Yorkshire.

These days, the police are confronted by organised national and international crime syndicates which do not respect boundaries or the niceties of how we structure our police authorities. Our police forces can respond to such a threat only if they have a more focused and structured police service. The modernisation of the police service is overdue. There are many good measures in the Bill which will help to deliver it, and I shall certainly support the Bill in the House tonight.

8 pm

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): I join the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) in declaring an interest. I am a parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation of England and Wales.

My concern is not just for the Police Federation; it is also for my constituents. Crime in Warwickshire has trebled since 1979 and burglaries and car thefts have quadrupled. The number of police officers has increased by 16.4 per cent. in the same period. In the face of such crime, it is important, in my view and that of my constituents, that the Government are seen to support the police.

Maintaining police morale among those who do an increasingly difficult and complex job, often putting their lives at risk, should be a Government priority. The Sheehy report, the White Paper on policing, the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill and the Home Office inquiry into the core functions of policing are not the way to maintain police morale. The effect has been the opposite. The police have had to fight off successive Government attempts to restrict and cut their salaries, cut out ranks and undermine their role.

The Government have now, to some extent, disowned the Sheehy report, although some of its recommendations are in the Bill and others are likely to see the light of day in the Police Negotiating Board in the next few years.

There is great concern among the police that there is still a Government agenda on policing. That agenda is evidenced by Sheehy, the White Paper, the Bill and the inquiry into the core functions of policing. Let me say something about that inquiry, which is important as it is part of the context of the Bill. Taken as a whole, it is part of a series of policies which cause considerable concern to the Police Federation.

The general secretary of the Police Federation, Mr. Lyn Williams, has said that he foresees Government policy reducing the number of fully trained professional police officers in England and Wales from 126,000 to 80,000 by the end of the decade—a cut of 46,000 officers. He sees that as the way in which the Government will develop their policies. The Home Office has not maintained the number of authorised establishments in a number of forces and there is increasing sub-contracting of functions to the private sector.

A recent paper presented to the Bolton conference on policing earlier this year written by Dr. Peter Moran and Mr. Alex Alexandrou stated:

"There is little doubt that creeping privatisation of police functions is taking place with the tacit assent if not active encouragement of the Home Office. Attested police officers are a homogenous group with regard to training and vetting: private security guards are not".

The concern is that there is a great temptation for the views about privatisation that have been all too apparent in a number of our public services to be moved into the area of policing. In some American cities, if someone phones the police because he is locked out, someone answers the 911 number and the caller says, "I am locked out, can someone assist?" The telephonist presses a button and the call goes to "Get You In Ltd.", or whatever company it is. If the caller has a cat up a tree or a problem with a licence, he gets put through to We Get Your Cat Down, We Assist You To Get Across the Road or We Provide a Licence For You. Private companies carry out many of those roles.

It is tempting for the Government to say that the core function of policing should be defined, that the police should concentrate on that core function and that the other functions—obviously, if we define core function we shall also have non-core functions—should be hived off to the private sector.

The effect of that, and the concern of the Police Federation at the erosion of police functions and the number of police officers, is to erode the many non-confrontational links that the police have with the community. The way in which we develop community policing in Britain is that the police are part of and integrated with the community, and, in order to fight crime, we are trying to encourage the public constantly to co-operate with the police.

The effect of restricting the police to core functions would do two things. First, the public would deal with the police primarily if a serious offence had occurred and not in the non-confrontational cases where people needed help or a licence to be issued, for example. Secondly, the police deal with the public only when they have to go in hard, carrying out their core functions. In those circumstances, there is a danger that the police could develop the same attitudes as have been seen in places such as Los Angeles, where there have been problems in recent years. If we restrict the police to core functions, we shall, to some extent, change attitudes within the police. That is a considerable danger of which the Police Federation is aware.

There is another developing problem that many people have experienced and that many hon. Members have seen in their constituencies. We are suffering increasing plagues of security guard company representatives knocking on doors saying, "For £1.50 a week we will watch your house because you have no policing in your area". That has occurred in several parts of my constituency.

At the moment there is little or no regulation of those private companies. I hope that during the passage of the Bill I will be able to persuade the Clerk to accept an amendment to address that problem. It is possible at the moment for someone to come out of prison, after having committed a series of burglaries and with a long criminal record, to buy himself a dog, knock on doors and say that he will protect people from burglaries. That is not the sort of person one wants to protect one's house.

The chief constable of Avon and Somerset, David Shattock, said recently that he was powerless to stop a private security company run by a man with a long criminal record, including a prison sentence, from operating street patrols in his area. He was very concerned that the growth of untrained and regulated companies patrolling streets was an open invitation to criminals. He said:

"What better way of committing a crime than buying a van, putting on a white peaked cap and patrolling people's houses? If you are caught shining a torch through the back of a building, it is the perfect answer".

We need to ensure that we have proper regulation of those companies, but we also need to ensure that the build-up in the past century of a professional police force which has links with the community is not undermined by moving from community policing towards forcing the police into dealing only with their core functions.

The Bill must be seen in the overall context of Government policy on policing. I accept that many of the Police Federation's key concerns have been dealt with in another place. The Bill that went into the other place was, humiliatingly for the Government, not the Bill that came out. The federation's main concern was that the Bill as it went into the other place would have politicised the police, putting them under effective Whitehall control.

That fear was based on the fact that various proposals, justifiable to some extent in themselves, when put together were worrying—fixed-term contracts for senior officers; Home Office-appointed chairmen to police authorities; performance targets; policing plans; and amalgamations. To some extent, many of their Lordships shared those concerns and, to be fair to the Government, the Bill as now presented is somewhat emasculated. None the less, it is still worrying and dangerous.

It must be remembered that the proposals come not from any royal commission, independent inquiry, Select Committee or any body outside the House which requested such changes. They come with the opposition of all the police staff associations and police authority members of all political parties as well as all the groups involved in policing and the magistracy.

Why do we have the Bill? There does not seem to be any real explanation, other than an ideological one. Major constitutional changes seem to have been made at the service of a half-baked ideological nostrum. The Bill seems to have been concocted from the Sheehy report. That is not the way in which to run a law and order policy in Britain.

The Police Federation's concerns about the Bill centre on five main areas—discipline; local police plans; amalgamations; the role of the police negotiating board; and the disqualification of certain police authority members with previous convictions abroad.

Discipline is a major concern because it directly affects all serving police officers. The Government's concessions on the appeals tribunal and on legal representation are

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welcome. I just wish that the proposals had never been put forward in the first place. But there is concern about the cost of appeals. Under section 37(5) of the Police Act 1964, the police fund meets the costs of police officers who mount appeals against dismissal, reduction in rank or required resignation. But under the Bill, the appellant will be liable for the whole of his or her costs unless the police appeal tribunal directs otherwise.

The federation believes that that will have a markedly discouraging effect on appeals and that is to be regretted. It is right that officers should be able to undertake appeals that are open to them and costs should not be allowed to prohibit such a course.

Double jeopardy is another concern which I am sure will be debated at some length in Committee. I listened with interest to the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway), but, to some extent, he missed the point. The issue is not so much whether the policy is right in terms of the criteria of balance of proof or beyond reasonable doubt in court. I accept that there is a distinction there. But the police officer is in a unique position. Moreover, he will clearly be subjected to a number of allegations that are patently untrue. It is wrong that he should be forced repeatedly to go through what is in effect a trial for the same thing. Therefore, double jeopardy is the issue rather than the balance of proof in any one situation. It is wrong that an officer should be tried twice for the same thing. That is against most of our common law principles developed over many centuries.

The federation is also concerned about the police plan, local policing objectives and performance indicators. The federation wishes to preserve the operational independence of chief constables in relation to the setting of local policing objectives and performance criteria. The responsibility for producing an annual report should belong to the chief constable. The federation argues that the chief constable, having overall responsibility for operational policing, is in a better position to handle information concerning his or her area and is free from political restraints. Consultation and co-operation between police authorities and the Home Office is essential, but not guidance in that sense.

Amalgamations are an essential and important concern. As a Member of Parliament for a Warwickshire constituency, an area with one of the smallest police forces in the country, I know that it is important to clarify the amalgamations issue. When the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) was Home Secretary, he said that he wanted to cut the number of constabularies in England and Wales from 43 to about 20, the better to be able to manage chief constables. Ministers now deny that they have such plans, but the Home Secretary still refuses to drop the new process that he has instituted which prevents a proper public inquiry into any amalgamations. Why?

The Home Secretary should be required to show at a public inquiry that any proposed amalgamation should enhance police efficiency. The present local inquiry procedure proposals to alter or amalgamate police forces should remain. The procedure allows the relevant police authorities and local constabularies to voice concerns and possible opposition to proposed alterations. The Home Secretary's proposals, on consultation procedures and timetables, are clearly inadequate to allow that to happen properly.

The Bill proposes a consultation period of approximately two months. That appears unrealistic and undemocratic as an announcement on proposed alterations could be made during a holiday period, making it virtually impossible for local authorities, police authorities and local communities to make a proper considered response. The proposed changes as outlined in the Bill will enable the Home Secretary to carry through a major reorganisation of police forces against the wishes of substantial sections of local opinion and the police and could well be against proper police efficiency. The Bill gives the Home Secretary powers to create super-forces, covering eight or 10 regions. Who knows? There would be no local inquiries and very little opportunity for proper parliamentary scrutiny.

The federation has a number of other concerns. At the moment, the police negotiating board is restricted in its ability to deal with aspects of pensions. Given that a police officer contributes one third of the cost of his pension, it would seem right for police pensions to be fully negotiable. But the Government do not appear to be willing to allow that. That is illogical and I hope that we shall be able to discuss it in Committee and in due course to propose amendments.

One minor point worrying the federation which caused problems when it was raised in another place, perhaps because of definition—I doubt whether the Government would be opposed to the federation's aim—relates to a person who has committed an offence abroad not being allowed to sit on police authorities. That is not dealt with in the Bill and I hope that in due course we shall be able to rectify it.

Mr. Fabricant: How does the hon. Gentleman suggest that the Home Office or the Committee should handle a situation where an offence committed abroad is not an offence here? I agree with the hon. Gentleman's point, but that would have to be taken into account.

Mr. O'Brien: I accept that there may be circumstances in which an offence committed abroad would be regarded here as perfectly proper—for example, a political offence in another country such as a protest against a dictatorship or other such regime. That should not result in disqualification from membership. We would have to find a way to evaluate each case individually rather than simply saying that every person who had committed such an offence would be blocked. The principle is important. People who have committed abroad serious criminal offences, which we recognise as such, should not serve on police authorities.

The Bill is not what is needed in the fight against crime. It creates uncertainty where continuity and certainty are needed. It undermines morale where morale needs to be enhanced. It fails to address the need for more resources and to put more police on the beat, when that need is crying out to be addressed in the face of rising crime. The Bill is flawed and, like my right hon. and hon. Friends, I will vote against it tonight.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Before I call the next hon. Member, may I point out that exactly one hour remains before the wind-up speeches.

Seven hon. Members hope to catch my eye, which leaves just under 10 minutes for each of them. I hope that hon. Members will bear that in mind.

8.20 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to catch your eye.

When my right hon. and learned Friend made his 27 announcements at our party conference, my constituents were overjoyed. [*Laughter.*] Opposition Members may laugh, but I suspect that their constituents also were overjoyed because unfortunately they, like my constituents, will suffer from the rising tide of crime to which I shall refer later.

I spent many a long hour on the Standing Committee that considered the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill. That excellent Bill implemented 19 of my right hon. and learned Friend's measures. The other part of the double-barrelled approach to reforming our criminal justice system is the Bill before the House. It will implement a further six of my right hon. and learned Friend's proposals—all those that require legislative change. [HON MEMBERS: "Hallelujah."] I am grateful for that salutation from Opposition Members, who obviously approve of my remarks.

The Bill deals with the overall structure of the police, which has not changed to any measurable extent for the last 30 years, and reforms the magistracy system, which has not changed to any measurable extent for the last 50 years. It is clear that both are long overdue for a long, hard look. I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department on the extent of their consultation and their ability to listen to sensible representations. I do not accept the criticism made this evening that the fact that they amended the Bill as it passed through the other place means that they are weak. In fact, that showed their statesmanlike character and willingness to make sensible changes to their proposals as they went along.

My right hon. and learned Friend said that crime has increased throughout the western world over the past few decades. The number of notifiable offences in 1993 was 5.5 million, which is 119 per cent. up on the same period in 1977. The number of clear-ups increased by only 38 per cent. during that time. Worse still, the number of indictable offences proceeded with rose by only 3 per cent. and the number of cautions increased by 88 per cent. Clearly, not everything is perfect in this country's criminal justice system and I welcome a long, hard look at the nuts and bolts of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill and the overall structure of the Police and Magistrates Courts' Bill.

In common with the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright), I spent a whole night out with the police, in Cheltenham. We arrested a person who was in possession of drugs—[HON. MEMBERS: "We?"] The constable arrested the suspect, and he was still dealing with the paperwork at the police station four hours later. That cannot be sensible. The police on the beat were well overstretched that particular night. It is incumbent on us all to ensure use of the latest technology available to the police —video recordings, sound recordings, electrostatic document analysis techniques and DNA fingerprinting—so that the amount of paperwork and wasted time is reduced.

Anyone who has been involved in business knows that the best way to run a company is with the flattest, shortest command structure possible. I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's proposal to reduce the number of police ranks by two. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary intervened to say that that has already enabled another 450 extra constables to be put on the beat in the past two months alone. It is estimated that, in an entire year, that change will put an extra 3,000 police on the beat. That is precisely the improvement for which my constituents have been calling—more police in the front line, on the beat, to detect crime and to arrest potential criminals.

I make a special plea to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary. In Gloucestershire, a large number of police officers are deployed on royal protection duties. My constituency contains no fewer than three royal households. I have already written to my hon. Friend on the matter, but I ask him again to give my county police force a few extra supernumerary officers to perform those duties. Surrounding counties do not have such a responsibility.

Royalty is considered a permanent risk, whereas any Minister of the Crown is considered a temporary risk for supernumerary purposes. My county is not considered for supernumerary officers, so I again ask my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to consider that request. In fact, I will write to him again, to see whether something can be done. That issue causes great annoyance to my constituents.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary set out his overall policy for the new system of police authorities. Much of tonight's debate has centred on the way that the balance has shifted between local police and local authority responsibility and the Home Secretary and chief constables. Replying to the Second Reading debate in another place, my noble Friend Lord Ferrers said that

> "the Home Secretary must retain some powers in the event of things going wrong. After all, he is responsible for the £6,000 million of public money which goes to police authorities . . . but this is not a centralising measure . . . it gives powers, responsibilities and accountability to the local police authorities and local chief constables."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 24 March 1994; Vol. 553, c. 808.]

Overall policing objectives will be set by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, but under new section 28A of the 1964 Act, the objective of local policing will be set by the local police authority. Subject to any particular directive under new section 28A, the local police authority must set out its own objectives, which may be different from, and additional to, the foregoing, and then produce a local policing plan. In addition, it must produce an annual plan.

That seems a wholly transparent, local procedure. To demonstrate that, clause 11 provides for one local police authority member to answer questions from any member of the local council. That wholly transparent and democratic local procedure is established by the Bill.

The flexibility displayed by my right hon. and learned Friend and hon. Friends in listening to sensible proposals during earlier stages of the Bill means that there will be five Home Office appointees. I admit that the system is rather cumbersome, but we want somebody other than a magistrate or local councillor to sit on a police authority. There is a wealth of experience in our communities. All sorts of trades and professions are represented by people who are perfectly capable of sitting on police authorities. Mention was made earlier of admirals, but many business

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and professional men, doctors, nurses and others would be perfectly well qualified to sit on a police authority and would considerably enhance its work.

As has already been mentioned, the chief constable, who is appointed by the local police authority, still has complete operational independence. I cannot stress that too highly. It would be intolerable to do anything different. If a sudden emergency arises, who will make the decision? Of course, it must be the chief constable. He now has an additional new power in that, subject to sticking within the budget laid down within the standard spending assessment system, he is able to exercise his discretion as to how many police officers he employs. Hitherto, he would have had to obtain permission from the Home Office to do that.

Mr. Fabricant: Does my hon. Friend agree that this is a good example of decentralisation, not centralisation? Does he not think it an absolute irony that Labour Members keep saying that this is a centralising Bill?

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that observation, but, as time is moving on and as Mr. Deputy Speaker will constrict me if I go on for too long, I shall simply say that I welcome the part of the Bill that deals with magistrates. Some 30,000 members of the lay magistracy give freely of their time to dispense an excellent system of summary justice in this country. I welcome the proposed reforms in that respect.

I challenged the Labour party to tell us what its policy is. We learnt one thing from the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair): the Labour party is no longer in favour of elected police authorities. But we did not find out what is to take their place. The Labour party has consistently opposed every single such Bill since 1984, including the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill. It opposed the Public Order Act 1986; the Criminal Justice Act 1988; the Criminal Justice Act 1991; and the Asylum and Immigration Act 1993. And, almost at the very moment when the mortars were going off at Heathrow, Labour Members trooped into the Lobby, within moments of hearing that announcement, to oppose the renewal of the prevention of terrorism Act. That is disgraceful.

There is no doubt that the Liberal Democrats opposed many of those aspects as well. We have already heard this evening that the moment that they get into power in local councils, they reduce the budget for the local police authority—time after time. They are no friends of the police either.

I welcome whole-heartedly the Government's bravery in taking a long and hard look at how our criminal justice system should be run, so that we can go forward together —the public, police and magistracy—and detect and convict more criminals and make our streets safe places on which to walk.

8.32 pm

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): It is fun to follow the hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown), who praised the Home Secretary for being a listening Home Secretary. It seems to me that the Home Secretary is a listening Home Secretary much in the way that Evander Holyfield was a listening ex-heavyweight champion to Michael Moorer. The Home Secretary was mugged in the House of Lords. Anyone who wants to read an account of a genteel mugging should read the report of the Bill's Second Reading in the House of Lords.

The Bill has been very badly damaged, but I shall concentrate, after several hours of debate, on the Scottish section of the Bill, which no one has talked about. Unfortunately, that part of the Bill has not been mugged. It has not been talked about or touched on. It deals inadequately, as far as this House is concerned, with Scottish legislation. If one wants to see why the Tories do so badly in Scotland, one should look at the way in which the Bill is presented. One of the special pillars of Scottish society is its separate and distinctive legal system, which, in many areas, is demonstrably better than the English system.

We see the arrogance of a Government who try to introduce changes to Scottish law simply by inserting them into English legislation. When the Home Secretary moved the Second Reading earlier, he made no reference whatever to its contents as far as Scotland is concerned, apart from something vague about bringing it into line with England. That is not adequate. There is no equivalent to the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who can reply to the debate on behalf of the Scottish Office.

I suspect that, any moment now—probably in 20 seconds—a Minister from the Scottish Office will come to the debate, and may or may not listen to this speech. We need some justification from the Government for why the Bill applies to Scotland. Which Scottish concerns does it meet? Who asked for it in Scotland? Nobody did. It has simply been put in the Bill. It does not meet any of the problems.

There is a need for a Bill that deals with problems in the Scottish legal system, but this is not it. We are crying out for parliamentary time to deal with the problems and issues that arise with regard to the system on children's hearings. There is a need to consider whether there should be an equivalent in Scotland, or something especially Scottish, to the Police Complaints Authority, because Scotland does not have one. But we do not have such a Bill.

What bothers me about this Bill is the depth of the contempt that the Scottish Office shows the people in Scotland in the way in which it has been introduced. They have not even attempted to make the case for the law change in Scotland. I am pleased to see the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) in his place. If he can point out to me where any Scottish Minister has attempted to make the case for the Scottish clauses, I will be pleased to give way to him now. I think that the fact that the hon. Gentleman does not wish to speak demonstrates my point.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): Having served on the Standing Committee on the local government Bill, I would have to say that those issues were mentioned on occasion, but not in depth. The detail of the Bill refers to the structure of the police force in Scotland. It aligns with the rankings in England. I am quite sure that my hon. Friends have had many discussions with the Home Office on that issue.

Mr. Worthington: That just demonstrates to me that even though the hon. Gentleman is present, he does not know what the Bill is about. It says nothing about the structure of the police force in Scotland.

We have to find a better way of dealing with Scottish legislation. A fortnight ago, during the debate on the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill—

Mr. Gallie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Worthington: No, I will not.

At 1 o'clock in the morning we had a debate on the concept of aggravated trespass. That subject has produced a considerable mail bag in Scotland, because of legitimate fears that the Government are acting on behalf of a large number of absentee landlords and simply incorporating into Scottish law something to deal with the problem in England of hunt saboteurs and new age travellers, and also because the Government are interfering with what is a traditional and very valued freedom in Scotland—the freedom to roam.

One Scottish Member was able to talk about that in Committee—my good and hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). Imagine the uproar if only one English Member of Parliament was able to speak on an issue affecting English law.

Last week, at 1 am, the rest of us could say something. We had a 90-minute debate, which was pathetically inadequate. But then the Minister got up to reply—he has still not turned up tonight—and took only three minutes, under clear instructions to get up and shut up. The vote took place. The Secretary of State for Scotland did not even bother to turn up. That is how we deal with Scottish legislation.

Today, we continue that charade. It is a contempt for democracy. It is a V-sign at the Scottish electorate. It is a major change to the law in Scotland with regard to the police, with no discernible reason put forward for it. There will be one, or even two, Scottish Members on the Committee. No Minister from the Scottish Office will speak today. No Scottish Minister has spoken on the issue in public and made the case. Big changes will be made to the constitutional position of the police in Scotland. There will be yet more centralisation of the controls of the Secretary of State for Scotland, on the basis of no argument whatever, and being done independently of the Local Government (Scotland) Bill, referred to by the hon. Member for Ayr.

Joint boards will be set up. That will mean more joint boards in many parts of Scotland. My area—Strathclyde—is to cover at least 10 separate unitary local authorities. There will be absolutely no sense of partnership: that is bound to lead to much more remoteness, and to yet another democratic deficit in Scotland.

As a result of the Bill, we are even losing the requirement for a chief constable to consult the police authority when determining the number and ranks of men in the force. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Ayr knew that. Furthermore, as clause 46 makes clear, in future the annual report will be made not to the police authority but to the Secretary of State: it requires such matters to be reported

"as the Secretary of State may prescribe".

It will not be a question of what the police authority thinks important, or even a question of what the chief constable thinks important.

The relationship between police and state is one of the most difficult constitutional issues that any society must face. The police must be under the control of the state—they can never go their own undisciplined way—but they must be free to feel the collars of the most powerful in the land. If the Secretary of State behaves in an inappropriate and illegal manner, he must be arrested without hesitation.

To cope with that, we in Britain have invented a subtle tripartite system involving the control of operational matters by the chief constable: some powers for local authorities, some for the Secretary of State and some for Her Majesty's inspector of constabulary. If we wish to change the relationship between those three powers, we should do so only in the most measured, calm and reasonable way.

Mr. Gallie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Worthington: Certainly.

Mr. Gallie: Will the hon. Gentleman tell us precisely where the Bill states that the chief constable, or the constabulary, cannot take the Secretary of State for Scotland into custody if he commits a misdemeanour?

Mr. Worthington: I do not often alarm the hon. Gentleman this much. I did not say that; I said that there must be a three-way balance of power in the system that we have invented, so that the chief constable has operational responsibility and—within that responsibility—does not feel threatened by one of the other powers. What alarms me is that, with fixed-term contracts and with the Secretary of State determining what is to be in the report delivered to him, a picture is building up of too much control going in one direction. We are seeing a Secretary of State who acts as God, with contempt for both the police service and local authorities.

When debating this issue, we must bear in mind both the fact that local government is being reorganised, and the Government's plans with regard to payment for results. Payment for results in itself constitutes a formidable centralisation of power: it means telling officers how they will be judged worthy of receiving extra money. I should be astonished if the Secretary of State said that they should be given extra money for investigating City fraud, for example; we are already seeing the Government's attitude in their relaxed attitude to tax evasion, as opposed to DSS fraud.

The Government must spell out to us why the Bill applies to Scotland. The Home Secretary has not done so today. In particular, we must hear some reasoning about what is currently going wrong in terms of Scotland's police forces. Only last week, Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary produced a periodic report on the forces in Scotland. It included a glowing report on Strathclyde, which pointed out that in 1993 there had been a 20 per cent. drop in violent crime. It has been claimed that crime has fallen in England and Wales, but that did not include violent crime. This is in spite of all that the Government can throw at us in terms of unemployment and growing inequality.

The finding, however, does not result from any action taken by the Home Secretary. Today, we have heard reference to the underfunding of the police forces; the chief inspector points out that in Scotland the Home Secretary substantially underfunds the capital requirements of Strathclyde police force, in comparison with those of similar metropolitan police authorities elsewhere. However, the report states:

"Despite the effects of the Sheehy Inquiry, morale within the force is high with a belief that real progress is being made at last on the crime front."

[Mr. Worthington]

Crime is a real worry, in Scotland and elsewhere; but the level has remained static and fallen in Scotland, while it has soared in England. A huge amount of that development has been due to the partnership between local authorities and the police—a partnership which the Government will damage with this Bill and the Bill to reorganise local government.

Although Second Reading is a bit late in the day, the Government must explain why the Home Secretary knows best. Just why does he, rather than the local authorities, know how much to spend on the police? Just what knowledge does he have? Ministers have taken no steps to meet local councillors directly, even after the publication of the Bill; they certainly took no such steps before its publication. We are seeing wrong-headed action by those who want to centralise control even further.

Policing in Britain is one of the institutional miracles of which I think we should be proudest. Unlike most societies in the world, our police work on the basis of consent: typically, they do not carry arms, and they constitute a social service as well as a force. Everything in the Bill will weaken that trend—that central cultural feature of our policing. Payment will go not to the social service aspects —not to community policing—but to other, as yet unspecified, sectors.

We send our police around the world. They are in South Africa and Somalia now, teaching the doctrine of policing by consent. What I find extraordinary, and what bothers me, is the weakening of the central relationship between police, local authorities and local people by this Home Secretary and his aide de camp the Secretary of State for Scotland—who has not even shown up today—with no reference to the Scottish people. They have not even had the common decency to make a case for the Bill. When will they do so?

8.47 pm

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): I welcome the opportunity to speak on this important issue. My hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown)—together with other Conservative Members—pointed out forcefully, in his customary manner, that we are, indeed, the party of law and order. The Bill is designed to make it easier for the law enforcers, both police and magistrates, to clear up crime, streamline procedures—that seems logical enough to me—and modernise the organisation and management methods of the police and, indeed, magistrates courts.

Having said that, I am mindful of those who have a number of reservations about the Bill. I welcome the fact that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has taken into account some of the anxieties felt by some of our friends in the other place. Tonight, therefore, I wish to focus primarily on the reforms of the police—on why they are needed, and on why so many of the reforms will benefit both the police and the population at large. Too often our opponents, in their desire to oppose for opposition's sake, seem to forget that these reforms are designed to make it easier to tackle crime—to make it easier for our constituents to sleep safely in their beds at night or walk the streets without fear of mugging or sexual assault. Why do those on the Opposition Benches seem so ready to forget that fact?

The Government have made great strides in recent years to ensure that the police have a better deal. Not only has the number of police risen by close to 16,000 since 1979—to a record 129,000—but police pay has risen by nearly 40 per cent. during that period. The Conservative party has a record to be proud of in these matters.

I very much welcome the Government's decision to enhance community policing. Thousands of police have been put back on the beat. The neighbourhood watch, safer cities and urban crime fund initiatives have been a tremendous success. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) said earlier this evening, there are now more than 115,000 neighbourhood watch schemes, including many in Lichfield and Stone which I have the honour to represent.

The purpose of the reforms is clear: to devolve power away from the centre—not to centralise—down to the local police authorities and the local chief constable. It is surprising that Opposition Members who so often spout the rhetoric of devolution seem to oppose it when it is introduced. Perhaps even more important, the Bill once enacted will unshackle the police from huge amounts of paperwork and bureaucracy, freeing police officers to combat crime.

I have seen it myself at Lichfield police station. I am not the only hon. Member from Staffordshire—an Opposition Member spoke earlier—who has been on the beat with the police. I, too, have seen at Lichfield police station and elsewhere the huge sea of paperwork under which the police could drown. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to Inspector Colin Bailey, who is based at Lichfield police station in Frog lane and who has taken me on a number of police patrols in the area.

Paperwork can be damaging. As the writer Joe Orton once said, reading should not be an occupation that we encourage amongst police officers. I guess that the same goes for writing, too. Only three or four months ago, the Home Office provided guidelines to the police about how their paperwork could be reduced. That initiative is to be applauded.

The strengthening of the police authorities is an important step, particularly as the original proposals have been refined still further. The deepening of local accountability is a key feature. Police authorities will have a legal obligation to consult the local community about matters of importance. Opposition Members who have said that local authorities will not be accountable to local people are wrong. I argue that the police authorities will be more accountable as a result of the Bill.

Accountability is enhanced by the duty of the police authority to publish a local policing plan each year and to explain whether its objectives have been achieved. It is wrong that police objectives should be shrouded in secrecy as, to some extent, they have been in the past. This is not a centralising Bill just because the Home Secretary will have some say in local police authority affairs. I am sure that if Opposition Members were ever to get their hands on the police budget of £6 billion, even they would want to have some say in how the money was spent.

There has been inconsistency on the Opposition Benches. Earlier in the debate the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) said that the Bill was centralising power, but almost in the same breath he criticised the fact that the magistrates courts would be

given the freedom to provide contracts of employment. It seems to me that there is some dichotomy in what Opposition Members believe.

A further agreeable aspect of the proposed reform is the simplification of procedures for the amalgamation of police forces, with the appropriate checks and balances, so as to avoid wasting resources. I have seen for myself how neighbouring police forces use different vehicles and different telecommunications equipment which does not allow them to communicate with each other properly.

There seems to be some concern among Opposition Members when they speak about a national police force. I emphasise—it is made absolutely clear—that there are no plans at present for the amalgamation of two or more police forces. In any event, speaking as an individual and not on behalf of the party, I do not see what is wrong with the idea of a national police force. Hon. Members will recall that the police force was begun by Robert Peel on a local basis. *[Interruption.]* I am very pleased that I have finally woken up those on the Opposition Front Bench. The local police forces were set up to show their difference from the Army which had formerly undertaken policing. We have moved a long way since then. *[Interruption.]* I am honoured that the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng), compares me with my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor. I take that as a great compliment.

The amalgamation of police forces can be advantageous because buying in volume and having integrated systems must make for a major improvement. Nevertheless, we should take into account the views of the Police Federation on this point and ensure that there is adequate parliamentary scrutiny and possibly local inquiries if any local amalgamation is to take place.

The implementation of some important Sheehy proposals should do much to ease bureaucracy and streamline management. The abolition of the ranks of deputy chief constable and chief superintendent will allow chief constables to engage close to 3,000 extra police constables on the beat, if they so choose. I, for one, hope that they will choose to use their extra resources to put extra police on the beat.

Although this is an important and worthy aspect of the Bill, I nevertheless think that it is important that we recognise that there are those who have some genuine anxieties about certain parts of the Bill.

Mr. Gallie My hon. Friend is talking about restructuring within the police force and perhaps disposing of ranks. Given the words of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) to the effect that there is no restructuring of the police force in Scotland, does he realise that that is contained in the Bill?

Mr. Fabricant: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. It displays yet again how Opposition Members are aggressive but their aggression is based on fallacy. Chief police officers—including the chief constable of the Staffordshire police, Charles Kelly—are concerned that the abolition of ranks will enhance operational difficulties rather than diminish them. The Association of Chief Police Officers may have a point when it states:

"Removal of the Chief Superintendent and Chief Inspector ranks—

we now know that the chief inspector rank will not be removed—

"could lead to an informal rank structure which could give rise to the formation of 'Seniors' and 'Juniors' within the remaining ranks.

It is feared the loss of clarity could seriously compromise efficiency in certain situations particularly in instances of spontaneous public disorder and major disasters which require instant response and do not allow for pre-planning."

Nevertheless, I have worked in organisations where there were far too many chiefs and not enough Indians, and I remain to be convinced by the arguments presented by the Association of Chief Police Officers, especially now that the Home Secretary has made this major and important concession.

Junior ranks, too, are concerned about the new disciplinary procedure. The Police Federation made the valid point, which has been mentioned by hon. Members of all parties, that safeguards are needed in relation to disciplinary procedures. It correctly said that police officers are in a "monopoly employment situation"—if they are dismissed, they lose the right to practise their profession.

I therefore fully accept that it is important that, when police officers are accused of alleged misdemeanours, there are high procedural standards. They should include the right to cross-examine witnesses and have legal representation. The Police Federation states:

"Policing in the United Kingdom is normally conducted by officers acting alone and if the burden of proof and the procedural standards required to prove disciplinary allegations are reduced to that of ordinary employment law, police officers will be reluctant to act knowing that a complaint, perhaps corroborated by some other ill-disposed person, could quite easily lead to a loss of livelihood."

That point has also been taken on board, thus proving the flexibility of the Home Office and its ability to listen.

The vast majority of our police offer a first-rate and excellent service and do not deserve to have the weight of the law unfairly balanced against them, in the form of disciplinary procedures.

My near neighbour, the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright), made great play of clause 23, which deals with the acceptance of gifts and loans. He spoke at great length about companies such as McDonald's possibly sponsoring police cars and so on. SPACE—the Staffordshire Police Activity and Community Enterprise—is an excellent initiative introduced by the Staffordshire police. It helps to look after children during the summer recess. I would argue that it could well do with sponsorship, which would enable resources to be put back into policing on the streets.

I have travelled and lived all over the world, but I believe that our police force is second to none. It carries out its duties admirably. In true Peelite spirit, the Bill will do much to modernise the force and equip it for the 21st century. As with any major reform, there are bound to be anxieties but, as he has shown with his alterations to the original Bill, I am sure that the Home Secretary will take any apprehensions on board. We would do well to remember Gilbert and Sullivan's warning:

"When constabulary duty's to be done,
A policeman's lot is not a happy one".

That is sometimes the case even in Staffordshire.

9.1 pm

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South): I now know why this is called Second Reading. I thought that I had heard that speech before and then I realised that it resembled J.

[Mr. Bruce George]

Arthur Rank's "Look at Life" series from the 1960s—both offered an idealised version of what was happening in the world.

I am deeply offended by the hon. Members who try to make political capital out of any divisions within the Labour party or of our supposedly being anti-police. Having watched at first hand the party that is supposed to be the party of defence and of law and order, I suggest that we should not be regarded with such disrespect. I say that because the police are in a critical period: the police, private security, the non-Home Department police forces, the military and all the organisations that have a responsibility for policing and security are uncertain about their future.

In the past few years, we have had a royal commission, a White Paper, nonsensical speeches at party conferences and legislation, but I do not believe that the police are any nearer being able to resolve the problems that they need to resolve in order to tackle crime effectively. The Bill will not take them any further down that road.

The Home Office and the Government need to demonstrate a degree of imagination in defining policing in the next five or six years, and in defining the relationship between the police and the private sector. The most important activity undertaken by the Home Office has nothing to do with the Bill. I should have liked the Bill to be postponed until the internal inquiry into core responsibilities has been published because that will determine the nature of policing in the years ahead, the size and functions of the police force, and what functions will be handed to or usurped by the private sector. Some serious analysis is required but the Bill does not provide it.

We have heard some remarkable examples of Toryspeak. The climbdown in the House of Lords is described as a great piece of statesmanship, in the same way as I suppose a full-blooded and fast retreat could be described as a tactical regrouping.

The other great piece of Toryspeak is, "We are the party of law and order." The Tories need not look far in their own constituencies to find out about the perception of crime, and regrettably the reality of crime is coming closer and closer to the perception. People are extremely anxious, and if the Bill is to reassure them, the Government will have to re-examine it much more closely.

There may be a return to basics, but regrettably we are returning almost to the basics of the pre-1830s, before the modern police force and modern municipal government were established. As has already been said, in those days policing was the responsibility not of the police force but of the watches or of the military. Otherwise there was self-protection. Then the police and municipal government were established, and our system for 140 years or so has rested on them.

Now we are reverting to a position in which the private sector will have a greater role than the official sector of policing. I am sorry to bore the Minister further on that subject, but if the private sector is to be expanded, as has happened exponentially over the past 10 years, the minimum that the Government must do is to bring it within the framework of regulation.

The Bill, far from being a decentralising measure, is in some ways a piece of centralising legislation. It is not quite as bad as it was before it went to the House of Lords—I congratulate the other place on having done a good job on it—and we should bear that fact in mind. But the Bill is still centralising.

I do not like the idea of force amalgamations, or of the reform of the police boards; it will still be possible to pack a committee. I do not like the idea of what will happen to the town that I represent. Until 20 years ago it had a close and complete relationship with the police force and with the watch committee—in other words, with the "controlling element". Now we are not certain that we shall have even one member on the new police authority. I believe that in Manchester there will be more members available than there will be places, so we are going in the reverse direction, away from local accountability. That is greatly to be regretted.

I should like to speak at greater length, but time does not permit. The Government have got it wrong. Some of the deficiencies in the Bill have been partially remedied, and I hope that in Committee the Government do not take the opportunity to reinsert some of the more obnoxious features that have received universal criticism. I can think of few Bills, even among those introduced by the Government, that have attracted so much criticism. I also have considerable criticisms of the sections dealing with magistrates courts, on which we have all been lobbied.

We have heard much about the Government consisting of "listening Ministers". I have recently been reading about the rise of Chartism, and one of its demands—annually elected Parliaments—has still not been achieved. However, 120 years later we have annually appointed Home Secretaries. Perhaps some degree of stability could be introduced if the people who make the initial decisions were around to try to implement them.

I hope that the Committee will do a good job of work, and that the Act that emerges from the House will strengthen the law. I repeat my request that the people in the Home Office should have a little vision, and should look further than the end of their noses, and further than what might happen next week or next month. I ask them to look at the future shape of policing and security. That is imperative, and I hope that the Home Office will meet the challenge.

9.8 pm

Sir Roger Moate (Faversham): May I concentrate for a few moments on the part of the Bill that deals with the reorganisation of the administration of Her Majesty's magistrates courts? While I thank my hon. Friend the Minister and the Lord Chancellor for the courteous way in which they have received representations from me and others, they will not be surprised to know that I view that part of the Bill with something less than enthusiasm.

I must make it clear that, if there was evidence of great inefficiency in the system, or evidence of something fundamentally wrong, or evidence of wastage, I would certainly support fundamental reform of the magistrates court system. However, I do not believe that there is any such evidence at all. I must put on record the fact that this otherwise excellent Bill would be no worse, and would probably be much better, if the whole section on magistrates courts were to disappear altogether. It does not add very much to the sum total of the administration of justice.

Of course, one is not saying that there is not some inefficiency and some wastage. Even allowing for the

possibility of that, one must balance any such costs against the enormous saving that our society makes from the remarkable system of voluntary justice that we enjoy in this country.

It is a remarkable system in which so many thousands of people give service of the highest order freely and generously and handle—I forget the exact figures—90 or 95 per cent. of cases brought before our courts. Against minor inefficiencies, one must balance those enormous advantages to our society of the present voluntary system. When we seek to impose new criteria, cash limits, performance indicators, amalgamation and business plans, let us be careful that we are not discouraging those who have given—and we hope will give in future—service of that high order.

What is clear to me, and what motivates my criticism, is that the closure of local magistrates courts in many towns and rural areas—it has certainly happened in Kent, and is likely to continue throughout the country—undermines what I believe to be, and what most people perceive as, truly local justice. It leads to the undermining of the magistracy. I am not saying that there is a hidden agenda for the closure of courts. It is a very open agenda, certainly in Kent, where plans have become widely known and a number of courts are lined up for closure, and I have no doubt that what is applying in Kent is likely to apply throughout the length and breadth of the country.

If there should be any doubt, we were informed in a note from the Justices' Clerks Society that, in the briefing paper prepared by the Lord Chancellor's Department for the Select Committee, the suggestion was made that the Lord Chancellor could, under clause 66,

"'specify a minimum level of courtroom use'".

The clerks go on to say:

"This could lead to the widespread closure of local courts and courts offices. One of the effects of smaller towns losing their magistrates courts will be, particularly in rural areas, a loss of the availability of fair justice to defendants who may have difficulty reaching a distant court. Witnesses also will be deterred from attending".

What that means in plain English is the closure of smaller courthouses, not only through the effects of the Bill, but through the effects of the Bill coupled with the cash limits that the Lord Chancellor's Department has already been applying. If one combines those supposedly more efficient and businesslike structures with cash limits, the threat to the smaller courthouses arises.

It is not only that the Bill will create new chief executives—the term applied to justices' chief clerks—of newly amalgamated committees that alarms me. Those chief executives can, and I hope will, be made fully answerable to the magistrates courts committees in their areas. What is alarming is that those committees will in practice—perhaps not in theory—be impotent in the face of a more professional chief executive, whose principal job is to administer the cash, which is provided under cash limits by the Government in conformity with performance indicators laid down by the Government.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I am well aware of my hon. Friend's long and strongly held views on those matters, but is it not trespassing slightly into an area which would demean our magistrates to suggest that they would be powerless in the face of a clerk? I hold a much higher opinion of magistrates than that.

Sir Roger Moate: We all have a high opinion of magistrates, but this is a very serious point, to which I hope we shall return in Committee and on Report. I believe that I am right and that my hon. Friend is wrong. We have been over this ground before.

The difficulty is that, as a result of clerk and cash limits, the magistrates, however powerful and determined, will face the closure of some smaller courts. This is not hypothetical; it has already happened in my county, and I believe that it is likely to continue.

I am not saying that the problem is insoluble; I am making the point that we shall have to face up to it. The result of the legislation will be the closure, over the years, of many courthouses throughout the country.

Court closures often take place one at a time. When I want to object to a closure in my constituency, other people are not worried about closures in their areas. As the process is piecemeal, the House never gets to grips with what is a very significant change in society. Indeed, Members of Parliament often do not have the right to object as cases do not even reach the Lord Chancellor.

This is a very serious problem. A courthouse in Faversham that had been going for many hundreds of years—it housed one of the oldest benches in the country: a small and very efficient and cost-effective court—was closed down. We could not object, as Kent county council—the local authority paying 20 per cent. of its costs—did not object.

This is something for which I do not forgive the county council. Had the matter gone to the Minister, he might have reversed the decision. In my view, this will happen increasingly as we move into the whole new era of cash limits based on certain very rigid criteria, some of which I still think are rather peculiar, and the new structure.

What will happen under local government reorganisation? Who will have the right to object to a closure? At present, we do not know. Who will then contribute the balance of the costs of the magistrates courts? Again, we do not know. Would it not be sensible to wait for local government reorganisation before embarking on this restructuring of the magistrates courts committees?

We ought to require simply that every magistrates court closure is automatically referred to the Lord Chancellor. That would not be a very great change. I hope that there will not be many such proposals, and that we shall learn to resist those that are made. I should like to have it confirmed, preferably in the legislation, that there will not be high pressure for amalgamations. I cannot see great reason for amalgamation on the scale that is envisaged, resulting in a drop from 100 magistrates courts committees to 50 or 60.

Most important of all, as we embark on this new era, is that we should get rid of the formula—which I think has been suspended—that imposes on magistrates courts committees throughout the country certain performance requirements that do not make sense. It does not make sense for central Government to say, "This is the total available cash, and we shall reallocate it county by county, taking from some areas and giving to others where there is probably no need or no crying need, and disregarding history and the number of small towns, as well as the number of small local courts."

We have been in danger of centralising. No doubt the motive was good: the aim was to secure efficient justice and financial savings. However, I believe that we got it wrong. Thus, I hope that, in Committee and on Report, we shall have a chance of putting the situation right. I hope

[Sir Roger Moate]

that my hon. Friend will not resist those opportunities, but will respond to the many representations that he has received from hon. Members and from people outside.

9.18 pm

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): This unappealing and unacceptable Bill was introduced by the Home Secretary in his customary way—cynicism, complacency and calculation in large and equal measure. There was cynicism in the rationale which he applied in justification of the measure. There was complacency in the face of its manifest failure to deal with real concerns about crime and the administration of justice. There was calculation because at the heart of all that the right hon. and learned Gentleman does is not the interests of justice, not the proper and real concerns that need to be addressed about crime, but a cynical calculation of his political future.

Those of us who listened to all the speeches during the debate will have noted that the most striking feature was that only two Conservative Members could be found to give unequivocal support to the Bill. I refer to the hon. Members for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) and for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant). That says that all that needs to be said about the merits of the Bill.

Mr. David Atkinson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Boateng: No.

All that the Government could dredge up was, as I have said, the hon. Members for Cirencester and Tewkesbury and for Mid-Staffordshire.

Mr. Atkinson *rose—*

Mr. Boateng: There is another volunteer for the order of the brown nose.

Mr. Fabricant: You can talk.

Mr. Boateng: I am the last to say anything in response to the barracking about that order, but at least I know the origins of my nose.

I listened to the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway). It was a memorable speech in its way, but even in that there was a moment of concern or doubt—I am glad that he is now in his place—about the proposals for the special role of the lords lieutenant. Of all the things to find wrong with this measure and of all the agonies to be shared with the House, the hon. Gentleman was able to find one concern, which was the slight withdrawal of the importance and status of the role of lords lieutenant.

Such is the world in which some Conservative Members live. It is one far removed from reality, from the real concerns about crime and crime prevention. There are real concerns about the deplorable morale in magistrates courts and in the administration of justice generally.

Some important points were made by the hon. Members for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims), for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant), for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby), for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) and for Faversham (Sir R. Moate). There did not seem to be an unequivocal welcome from those hon. Members for the Bill. There seemed to be some concern.

I fear for the hon. Member for Faversham, who made an important and serious speech. He expressed the desire that certain matters would be raised in Committee. I saw the expression on the faces of the silent ones who sit on the Treasury Bench. Expressions of concern may well be made in Committee, but they will not, I fear, be made by the hon. Member for Faversham. The reality is—

Sir Roger Moate: I referred to consideration on Report. I have no particular ambition to serve in Committee.

Mr. Boateng: The hon. Member has been a Member of this place for a long time—for much longer than I—and he clearly knows the way it works.

The Home Secretary was only too anxious to share with us the anticipation of the contribution of the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department. The right hon. and learned Gentleman was only too anxious to palm off on him the difficult issues and the real concerns—

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): The poisoned chalice.

Mr. Boateng: Indeed. The Parliamentary Secretary will drink deep of that draught. He has been anticipating the drop for some time. That is surprising, bearing in mind his experience and position. He knows that there is widespread concern throughout the country and on both sides of the House about the provisions on reorganising magistrates courts. That is not surprising, given the measures in the Bill.

The Bill is a battered edifice. It was knocked about quite a bit in the course of its introduction in the House of Lords. The Home Secretary and his noble and learned Friend may rue the day that the measure was introduced there, because the robustness of mind in the other place has long since been quelled on the Conservative Benches.

The octogenarian tendency in the other place shows remarkable signs of life, and great spirit. We owe Members of the House of Lords a debt of gratitude, and we do not intend to let them down. The Bill was assaulted on both sides of the House. Although some of its edges were knocked off, and it was made a little smoother in parts, it remains an obstacle to the proper administration of justice, which is why we shall oppose it.

The Bill represents, in so obvious a form, the twin pinnacles of Toryism, on this and many other issues. The first pinnacle is the Tories' adulation of market forces and belief that the rules and disciplines of the market should be applied wherever possible. That is their approach to all issues. The second pinnacle is their obsession with centralisation, and loathing of local administration.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): Quite right, too.

Mr. Boateng: The hon. Lady has only just manifested herself in the Chamber. Her comment accords neither with what Ministers have said in this debate so far nor with the lip service which the Home Secretary has paid to the notion of local accountability. I expect that the Parliamentary Secretary will rise to his feet and say how much the Lord Chancellor supports the input of local magistrates courts committees. The reality, however, is different.

Let us see what is left now that the other place has had a go at this edifice. The power to remove directions to a

magistrates courts committee remains, as does the power to remove the chairman and members of a magistrates courts committee and replace them with appointees.

We are discussing not just the two co-opted persons —the Lord Chancellor's placepersons—who will have all the necessary qualifications required to be the placepersons of any Minister in this House: they will be paid-up members of the Tory party, preferably the spouse of a Conservative Member. There will doubtless be plenty of willing nominees for that post.

We are discussing not just the power to co-opt but the power, in certain circumstances, to replace the magistrates courts committees entirely by people who are not even justices of the peace. That is an incredible power, when one considers its constitutional implications.

The Bill still contains the power not to approve candidates for the post of justices' chief executive and justices' clerk. Then there are the powers of the inspectorate, and the indirect monitoring of justices' clerks by the chief executive. All those aspects remain intact, despite the amendments in another place, which were eventually accepted—although initially opposed—by the Lord Chancellor.

Mr. Mackinlay: What my hon. Friend describes must be seen against a backdrop of the growing concern, in this House and especially in another place, about the power of the Lord Chancellor and his office. Is there not widespread concern about the politicisation of his duties in administering justice, and is there not a case for a root-and-branch review of his roles, in respect both of the magistracy and of the administration of justice generally? Is my hon. Friend aware that their Lordships are holding a debate on that very point tomorrow evening?

Mr. Boateng: My hon. Friend has tabled a number of important questions in the House, and I know that the Lord Chancellor has met him to discuss his concern about the latter's role in relation to the late president of the Employment Appeals Tribunal, and the real concerns among the judiciary and the public alike about the fact that the Lord Chancellor is being given powers that lie outside his proper judicial functions.

It will therefore not be good enough if the Parliamentary Secretary dismisses as unworthy of consideration the idea that the Lord Chancellor might be tempted to misuse the considerable powers that this Bill will give him. Moreover, there are real anxieties about the extent to which the Treasury has its dead hand on the administration of justice. Increasingly, the Lord Chancellor is becoming the agent of the Treasury in matters of justice.

These are not fanciful notions; they are a real reflection of the worries expressed by Lord Ackner, a former Lord of Appeal in Ordinary, who has referred to the role of the Treasury and how it works against the interests of justice. He has also talked of the importance of the Lord Chancellor being a bulwark against this encroaching tendency.

In the House of Commons, we suffer from the fact that we do not have the Lord Chancellor before us: we have only his Parliamentary Secretary. Fond though we are of him, the Lord Chancellor's valet is no substitute for his own presence. [HON. MEMBERS: "His batman."] I did not use that word, because it would imply that there was a Robin—and he does not even have that. He does not even have someone to sit behind him—

Lady Olga Maitland *rose—*

Mr. Boateng: No, we have heard more than enough from the hon. Lady. This is not the place for her strictures on the bomb or the family. We are concerned here with the administration of justice.

Concerns have been expressed by no less a body than the Justices' Clerks Society, which has no political axe to grind. The Home Secretary cannot suggest that it is in the vanguard of revolution—a body subverted by the Labour party and used for our own political purposes. The society has a legitimate professional interest in the proper administration of justice.

That body and the Magistrates Association, a body of the utmost respectability, say on behalf of their members that they are concerned about the powers on amalgamation, and we look forward to some assurances from the Minister on that issue.

It is interesting to note the way in which the two parts of the Bill reflect the centralising and anti-democratic tendencies of the Conservative party. The Lord Chancellor will have power to amalgamate magistrates courts committees and petty sessional areas. Not only will there not be a local inquiry before that happens, but there will not even be an opportunity for magistrates courts committees to express a need or desire for amalgamation. It can be imposed willy-nilly.

How many magistrates courts committees are for the chop? Concerns have been expressed on all sides by hon. Members who have a particular regard for the work carried out in their areas. My hon. Friends the Members for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham), for Walsall, South (Mr. George) and for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) all reflected the concerns that have been expressed by me and by my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield, (Mr. Blair) about this power. How many committees do the Government have in mind to be left at the end of the day? Will there be 50 or 60, or fewer than that? What criteria will be applied in choosing?

The Lord Chancellor will have power to issue directives. What criteria will he apply before issuing them? Will they relate to the quality of justice or will there be a cost-cutting exercise? Will there be a gradual and steady encroachment by the private sector on the administration of justice?

The hon. Member for Faversham was wrong about that, because it is part of the hidden agenda. We are debating the privatisation of justice, and my hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) rightly expressed the concern of his constituents and the Police Federation about that.

Those of us who have had anything to do with the administration of justice and policing appreciate the importance of the establishment of local priorities. I make no bones about declaring my interest as a practising barrister, and declaring that we need to preserve that local accountability. We must also preserve the judicial independence which ensures that the functions of the magistrates and the court clerks are not usurped by a centralising force that has the interests of the Treasury at heart. We want cast-iron guarantees on that.

It would not be right to accept the palliative in clause 71, and it is not accepted by many of those who have good reason to know and to be concerned about the current state of morale among magistrates, their clerks and the communities they serve. They do not accept the assurances

[Mr. Boateng]

that were given by the noble and learned Lord in the other place. We shall not accept them either when they are parroted tonight by the Parliamentary Secretary. We want an assurance in clear and unequivocal terms that the Parliamentary Secretary will be prepared to accept a strengthening of that provision, so that judicial independence—the integrity of the system—is preserved.

There is a favourite word—one of those buzz words or market words—that has been imported by the Tories into the administration of justice. It is the notion of a stakeholder. That is what they teach, and that is what will be peddled by the chief executive in his role envisaged by the Bill—the notion that they are stakeholders in the administration of justice.

They believe that the main stakeholder is the Treasury, the people who pay the bill, the Government Department responsible for the money. We do not accept that. We do not believe that Treasury considerations should predominate over the interests of justice. There is one stakeholder in the administration of justice: the citizen—each and every one of us. The citizens, together as a community, demand that the administration of justice be protected; they demand that it be independent and secured.

We intend, in the course of our opposition to the measure tonight and in the weeks that lie ahead in Committee, to make sure that the administration of justice is secured, its independence is maintained, and its integrity upheld.

9.40 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (Mr. John M. Taylor): My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson), in an excellent speech, asked me two questions and I will answer him. My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims), who has kept me so scrupulously posted regarding the anxieties of outer London magistrates, asked me a question and I will answer him. My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) was as robust and listenable as ever, as indeed was my hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) and I shall pass on what he said about policing in Gloucestershire.

My hon. Friends representing police interests as well as their constituents did so most effectively and my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) got the point entirely about devolved powers and the local plan. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and I are grateful to all those and others, too.

My hon Friend the Member for Faversham (Sir R. Moate) recorded his strongly held views about magistrates. I assure him that I am a keen student of the final Adjournment debate of the last Parliament when he discussed these issues in the context of his local magistrates court.

My hon. Friend was right to say that 94 per cent. of criminal justice in Britain is dispensed by magistrates. Frankly, it is the jewel in the crown of the British judicial system. That we should have 94 per cent. of criminal justice dispensed by a peer group on a voluntary basis is a miracle. Nobody writing a written constitution would dream of presuming that, and we often forget to say thank you to our magistrates who provide that service.

The Bill confirms control of magistrates' administrative function where it should be: in the local magistrates courts committee. Any attempt to represent the proposals otherwise is fanciful. Anyone who does so cannot have read the Bill. In those terms, I reject the main drift of the comments of the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng).

We have heard a wide range of views from all parts of the House about the Bill. I shall not attempt to respond to every point. We shall have further opportunity to consider the Bill in detail, but I want to reply to some of the most important points raised.

I shall address first the points made on the parts of the Bill containing the provisions affecting the police. It has been suggested that the Bill will centralise control over the police. The opposite is true. The Bill gives greater responsibility to local police authorities and their local police forces. The Bill abolishes central Government controls over manpower numbers and all but the largest items of capital expenditure. It gives greater freedom to chief constables to manage the resources available to meet local needs.

The Bill makes clear the way in which the chief constable will be held to account by the local police authority, and the way in which the local police authority must account to local people for the quality of the service that the force provides.

It has also been suggested that the proposals in the Bill are unnecessary or irrelevant to fighting crime, or that they are damaging to the police service. That is also untrue. The Bill will ensure that we have the right statutory framework for effective and efficient policing.

The key changes in the Bill are essential if we want to have the best possible police service in the 21st century. It will create strong, independent local police authorities; greater freedom for chief constables to manage their forces; a clear framework for setting priorities and measuring performance; a new funding system and a strong inspectorate; and it will pave the way for better personnel management and discipline procedures—for a start.

Mr. Worthington: Will the Minister now do what the Home Secretary did not do and explain how the Bill applies to Scotland and justify it in the Scottish context, and do that now?

Mr. Taylor: Gladly. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) and the hon. Gentleman mentioned the Scottish part of the Bill. The Scottish provisions mainly cover issues that are dealt with on a Great Britain basis, such as rank structure and conditions of service. Therefore, it is appropriate for them to be included in a Great Britain Bill. *[Interruption.]* I must press on because time is limited, as I am sure hon. Members will understand.

The changes proposed will result in a police service which is better able to respond to what the public want because it is better organised and better run. By making accountability clearer, local people will be better able to see how well their local police are performing and whether they are meeting the needs of local communities. The Bill will help police forces to focus their efforts more effectively on those things that are of greatest public

concern. Together with the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, the Bill represents the most significant assault upon crime by any Government for many years.

It has been claimed that there was no consultation before the Bill was introduced. That simply is not the case. There was a full and open public debate about the future of the police service for more than a year before the Bill was introduced. The issues that the Bill addresses go back several years before that.

Mr. Bermingham: Will the hon. Gentleman, in a moment of sanity, tell me what the Bill does to improve the efficiency of the police force or to aid the prevention of crime?

Mr. Taylor: I have been telling the hon. Gentleman all that. Furthermore, the Bill improves structures, the career of policemen and accountability, and it makes for greater clarification, more local contact and more transparency. That is just a few of the things that it does.

Another suggestion tonight has been that national and local objectives together with local policing plans will interfere with operational independence. But let me reassure the House that nothing in the Bill compromises the operational independence of the chief constable. Clause 5 reproduces the provisions of the 1964 Act, which states that the force

"shall be under the direction and control of the chief constable".

The Bill increases his responsibility for running the force. Central controls over manpower numbers are abolished and clause 10 makes it clear that all civilian staff who work in support of the force are also to be under his direction and control.

Police authorities and the Home Secretary have always influenced policing. It is essential for the accountability of the police service that they should. It would be absurd to argue that a chief constable should not have regard to the publicly expressed opinions of his police authority and the Home Secretary. The Bill will make clear, open and public the way in which the chief constable will be held to account. The principles of greater openness and effective accountability are as important here as they are in any other part of the public sector.

The procedures for the selection of independent members of police authorities have been ridiculed in some quarters. However, it is now widely accepted that there should be a substantial independent presence in local police authorities. That will ensure that there is an opportunity for people from all walks of life to make a contribution. It will allow people with relevant skills or expertise to serve, without first requiring them to be local councillors or to sit on the magistrates bench. We need a procedure that allows them to be appointed, while ensuring that they are independent and not subject to any form of political patronage, whether from central or local government. That is what the Bill's selection procedures will achieve.

My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) asked what sort of people will be appointed to police authorities. We expect the authorities to appoint people from all walks of life who have valuable skills.

The Home Secretary will remain the Metropolitan police authority, safeguarding the national interest in the Met's work, and fully accountable to Parliament. For the Met, as explained in the White Paper, we are establishing a new and non-political body, outside the Home Office, to help the Home Secretary and Londoners to get the best from the reforms in London.

My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge also asked whether there should be a quota of councillors or other members on the Metropolitan police committee. It will be an advisory body, with 12 members selected for their individual skills and ability to help the Home Secretary to hold the commissioner to account—not as representatives of any particular organisation or group.

On the subject of chief constables, we fully appreciate the need to ensure that there are safeguards to prevent any police authority from acting capriciously. Those safeguards are likely to include a requirement for it to be clear at the outset whether the expectation is renewal, non-renewal or open competition—and a requirement to make it clear at the outset on what grounds decisions about renewal will be taken. The details of the new arrangements are currently under discussion with the Association of Chief Police Officers. In due course any regulations will be subject to consultation in the Police Advisory Board.

It has been suggested that there is no need to change procedures if there are no plans for police force amalgamation. It is important to realise that the Bill will lay the basis of policing for many years to come. It is sensible to allow for the possibility that in future it may be in the interests of police efficiency or effectiveness to alter existing police force boundaries. That is the purpose of the new procedures in the Bill.

The existing procedures are cumbersome and involve unnecessary delay and expense, which would be detrimental to the quality of policing. The experience of the 1960s shows that, under existing procedures, changes can take two or three years to implement. The new procedures in the Bill provide a full opportunity for any proposals for change to be considered, interested parties to raise objections and any proposals to be subject to approval by Parliament.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) asked what are the Government's intentions for the police authority in Northern Ireland. The Bill's Northern Ireland provisions make no change to the role of the police authority. In late March, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland published a consultation paper that set out views on the improvements necessary to clarify roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability within the structure of policing within Northern Ireland. Responses are invited by 31 May. We would not expect to bring forward provisions on that issue in this Bill.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann asked why police discipline in Northern Ireland is not included in the Bill. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State published a consultation paper on police discipline procedures and is considering the responses. Future legislation will be necessary to implement any changes and we would not expect to include such provisions in the Bill.

Part IV contains provisions relating to the magistrates courts service in England and Wales.

Mr. Maclennan: In respect of part II, which deals with Scotland, the Minister has sought to justify a United Kingdom Bill on the grounds that it deals with matters such as ranks on a United Kingdom basis. But the whole of part II amends Scottish legislation, the Police (Scotland) Act

[Mr. Maclennan]

1967. Does he realise that he is acting in a matter that will be widely regarded as unconstitutional and inappropriate in Scotland?

Mr. Taylor: I have seldom been rebuked with that degree of vehemence. I referred to the Scottish issues earlier, by request.

A number of hon. Members expressed concern at the provision in clause 62 which enables the Lord Chancellor to initiate the amalgamation of magistrates courts committee areas. The White Paper, "A New Framework for Local Justice", announced the Government's intention of reducing the number of magistrates courts committees to achieve the right balance between operational needs and maintaining the local nature of the service. It was quickly apparent that many committees found it difficult to plan their future in the light of it, because they did not, and could not, know whether they were to remain as they were or be amalgamated.

Later, in 1992, on the basis of criteria for the appropriate minimum size for a committee area—criteria on which negotiations took place—the Lord Chancellor invited committees to make proposals on how the reduction in the number of separate areas could be effected. On the basis of those recommendations, he reached a number of conclusions on where the amalgamations might take place.

The Lord Chancellor has made it clear that amalgamation of magistrates courts committee areas would be contemplated only if it was in the best interests of the service. That is reflected on the face of the Bill in clause 62(4). However, he has made it equally clear that he would not require amalgamation if the improvement in service that would flow from it could be achieved in other ways. The magistrates courts in outer London have been keen to explore that option. Their representative—the outer London action group—has met my officials on a number of occasions and has developed proposals, which have not yet been seen or discussed.

Mr. Boateng: Does the Minister anticipate any amalgamations and, if so, how many?

Mr. Taylor: The White Paper, which the hon. Gentleman will have read, anticipated that the number of magistrates courts committees would come down from the present 105 to something in the order of 50 to 60—*[Interruption.]* It is in the White Paper. It has been out for two years. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman has read it.

The progress of and approach to those discussions have attracted the approval of the outer London action group. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that those discussions have been sensitive. I did not wish to debate them before the courts in outer London had knowledge of them. The Lord Chancellor and I are confident that we are well on course to provide for outer London a scheme that should deliver the benefits of a larger administrative base without the amalgamation of committee areas. I shall report further developments to the House as the Bill progresses, and especially to my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: The Minister will recall that I challenged the Home Secretary on the provisions of clause 66. Will he now tell the House whether the provisions in that clause make it more or less likely that rural magistrates courts will close?

Mr. Taylor: Any decision about closure of a magistrates court—this may come as a surprise to the hon. Gentleman—is made locally by the magistrates courts committee. The Lord Chancellor has no locus in it.

Part IV contains provisions to bring up to date the administrative structure of the magistrates courts service. Such reform is well overdue. The reforms will better enable the service to deal with the challenge that it faces now and in the future without losing its essential nature as a local service in which the key management decisions are taken locally by local magistrates themselves. In that way, I believe that the magistrates courts, which have a long and proud history of public service, will continue that service in a secure and well-managed way.

The Bill—both the parts that deal with the police and those that deal with the magistrates courts—has a unified theme. Its purpose is to improve the management and organisation of the public services that play a key part in the fight against crime, so that they can provide the public with a better service. Together with the provisions in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, it represents the most significant assault on crime by any Government for many years. I commend it to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 290, Noes 247.

Division No. 218] **[10 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*	Butler, Peter
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*	Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*	Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Amess, David	Carrington, Matthew
Ancram, Michael	Carttiss, Michael
Arbuthnot, James	Cash, William
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Chapman, Sydney
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*	Churchill, Mr
Ashby, David	Clappison, James
Aspinwall, Jack	Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Atkins, Robert	Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*	Coe, Sebastian
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*	Congdon, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*	Conway, Derek
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*	Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Baldry, Tony	Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*	Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*	Cormack, Patrick
Batiste, Spencer	Couchman, James
Bendall, Vivian	Cran, James
Beresford, Sir Paul	Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Billen, Rt Hon John	Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Body, Sir Richard	Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas	Day, Stephen
Booth, Hartley	Deva, Nirj Joseph
Boswell, Tim	Devlin, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*	Dickens, Geoffrey
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia	Dicks, Terry
Bowden, Andrew	Dorrell, Stephen
Bowis, John	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes	Dover, Den
Brandreth, Gyles	Duncan, Alan
Brazier, Julian	Duncan-Smith, Iain
Bright, Graham	Durant, Sir Anthony
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter	Eggar, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*	Elletson, Harold
Browning, Mrs. Angela	Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*	Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Budgen, Nicholas	Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Burns, Simon	Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Burt, Alistair	Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*

Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawksley, Warren
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidlington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riffkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'ter V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thumham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bex'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge Hl)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick

Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman (Cumbernauld)
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George (Knowsley N)
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hughes, Roy (Newport E)
Hughes, Simon (Southwark)
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Ieuan Wyn (Ynys Môn)
Jones, Jon Owen (Cardiff C)
Jones, Lynne (B'ham S O)
Jones, Martyn (Clwyd, SW)
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane (Lpool Brdgn)
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan (Eccles)
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony (Stretford)
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David (Shettleston)
Marshall, Jim (Leicester, S)
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin (Gt Grimsby)
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. (Wy'nshawe)
Morris, Estelle (B'ham Yardley)
Morris, Rt Hon J. (Aberavon)
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael (N W'kshire)
O'Brien, William (Normanton)
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Prentice, Ms Bridget (Lew'm E)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Robinson, Geoffrey (Co'try NW)
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie (Dundee W)
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)
Smith, C. (Isl'ton S & F'sbury)
Smith, Rt Hon John (M'kl'ds E)
Smith, Llew (Blaenau Gwent)
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel (Dunfermline W)
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Taylor, Matthew (Truro)
Thompson, Jack (Wansbeck)
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan (Sw'n W)
Williams, Alan W (Carmarthen)
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David (Bolton SE)

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle and
Mr. John Cummings.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill

[*Lords*] [*Money*]

Queen's recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill [*Lords*], it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any expenses incurred by a Minister of the Crown under the Act, and

(b) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other enactment; and

(2) the payment of any sums into the Consolidated Fund. —*[Mr. Chapman.]*

10.15 pm

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): The money resolution, on which we shall soon vote, is as flawed and inadequate as the Bill. It fails to allow for the full costs of that misguided experiment in centralisation. It fails to allow for the extra bureaucracy that is inevitable, and it does nothing to provide the cash needed to fight or to prevent crime. It does not deserve the support or even the tolerance of the House.

We are told:

"Present expenditure on the police in England and Wales is currently over £6 billion annually. The Bill is not expected to have a direct effect on the level of expenditure"—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. May I ask you to request the hon. Members who are so loud in conversation to let my hon. Friend address the House in relative silence?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman certainly may. I ask hon. Members who are leaving to do so quickly and quietly, and to hold their conversations quietly, so that we can hear the Front-Bench spokesman.

Mr. Michael: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The explanation of the financial effects of the Bill tells us that the Bill is not expected to have a direct effect on the level of expenditure. Translated, that means that the police will be expected to do more with less cash from this Government of promise breakers. Is that charge unfair? Not at all.

We must bear in mind the fact that in the 1992 election campaign the Conservatives pledged to provide an extra 1,000 police officers, but afterwards they delivered a cut of 224. Things will get worse. Other police forces should take warning from the crisis on the streets of south Wales this year. The Home Office is holding back £2.5 million, Earl Ferrers, the Home Office Minister, has had to admit that he does not understand local government finance in Wales, and the Secretary of State for Wales has confirmed that his capping criteria apply to police spending, as to everything else. The Government hang on to the cash, and the price will be paid by police officers and by the public in south Wales.

The Conservative record does not inspire confidence. Since 1979 the Government have presided over an increase of 120 per cent. in crime, during which time police numbers have increased by only 7 per cent. The burden of paperwork has increased, as has the time spent waiting for courts. The burden of non-crime duties has increased each year, as has the time taken to meet the demands of the Crown Prosecution Service, which is often followed by the

disappointment of charges being reduced or dropped. The police, like victims and witnesses, feel let down, neglected and ignored.

An inadequate £21 million is to be provided for the implementation of the needless and unproductive upheaval that the Bill will bring about. Used properly, £21 million could make a real contribution. It could pay for 1,000 extra officers. But it will not; it will be swallowed up in administration and bureaucracy. The £21 million could be used to cut crime. The cost of the 20 original safer cities projects, which have now been cut, was £17 million. Putting the £21 million into safer cities would more than double the funding of the original programme. Instead, the Government have cut the lifeline for the first group of projects, and cut the staff and the cash available for the second of safer cities projects.

Those are the economics of the madhouse. With drug-related crime and retail crime estimated to cost £2 billion a year each, and burglary and car crime now constituting more than 53 per cent. of crime, the Government face a stark choice, which the money resolution totally ignores. The Government must either accept the appalling level of crime and give the police the tools and the cash to cope with it, or they must join Labour in the battle to reduce and to prevent crime in the country.

Why do the Bill and the motion ignore those realities? The reality is that chief constables and local police superintendents throughout the country are showing commitment and good sense by joining with local authorities and local communities in local partnerships against crime which are at the heart of Labour's approach to being tough on crime and its causes. The Home Secretary now borrows some of our words, but does nothing in the Bill to help to build such local partnership. Indeed, he threatens to undermine it by taking strategic powers away from local police forces.

The motion makes no allowance for the cost of merging police forces into ever larger and more remote units. Has the Home Secretary noticed that Dyfed and Powys police force, the smallest in England and Wales, has the finest record on clear up of crime and of crime reduction? Its main competition comes from Gwent, which is the second smallest force by numbers and which covers urban and valleys areas with massive problems. I suspect that, if the Bill goes through, some Minister will soon be back before the House with news of using the powers to merge police forces into ones which are ever bigger and ever more remote from the communities which they exist to serve. The cost of inefficiency and bureaucracy will be immense, and it is not costed and not allowed for in the motion.

I offer the Minister the following test of his goodwill and integrity: if he does not intend to merge police forces, if he does not intend to waste cash on centralising control, if he agrees with me that police forces should be locally managed, let him prove so by promising to drop clause 12 from the Bill in Committee.

The Minister must admit that we have not been given a single good reason for merging police forces. The only two reasons of any sort came from the Chancellor of the Exchequer during his brief but disastrous time at the Home Office when he first said:

"big is bound to be better—isn't it?"

That flies in the face of all available evidence. The Chancellor also offered a bizarre explanation with an anecdote about meeting interior Ministers in Europe. He claimed, on reaching agreement on some police issue, that each of them said that they would promise to go home and tell their chief of police to implement it, while our hapless Home Secretary could only promise to consult our 43 chief constables and ask them if they would follow it through.

That is good knock-about stuff, but it is not true. Everyone in our partner countries has laughed out loud at such an inaccurate picture. For instance, in Germany, Bonn has little power over police functions. The Länder runs the police service. It is a local and regional function, not a national function.

The Bill is based on the management style of "Dad's Army", backed by a money resolution designed in cloud-cuckoo-land. The Home Office cannot answer when asked to estimate the costs of computer hardware. Software is not mentioned in the motion. Neither Ministers nor civil servants can answer when asked from where the savings will come to make the revenue costs broadly neutral. They simply do not know. We all know that the police have been tightening their belts year on year for the past decade, as mounting crime has weighed them down.

What about extra costs in the Home Office? The Home Secretary is assuming the powers of a dictator over objectives and performance in every local area. If his orders conflict with the needs of the public, as they are likely to do, the chief constable will have to choose between obeying orders and protecting the public. As ever, the chief constables and elected representatives will seek to limit the damage, but will have extra burdens imposed on them by having to jump through hoops designed and chosen by the Home Secretary.

The Home Secretary will also have arbitrary powers to decide how Home Office cash is divided between police forces. There is nothing in the Bill to say that he has to do so against clear, published criteria, and that is certainly not spelt out in the money resolution. He does not have to be objective or to give reasons. The Government will have the power to cap on the one hand and the power to set the minimum budget on the other. The Home Secretary will sit at the top of a growing bureaucracy of central intervention and interference—a bureaucracy designed to measure the cost of everything and the value of nothing.

That is precisely what we see happening in the national health service. Doctors and nurses are strangled by red tape, and the number of accountants and managers is out of control. This is what the Bill offers our police service. Already the police department of the Home Office employs 2,232 staff. The Home Secretary should cut staff centrally and increase provision for personnel out on the streets. He should let local police forces get on with the job in partnership with local authorities and communities, including the business community, voluntary organisations and residents.

Is the figure of £21 million required under the money resolution accurate? Is £6 billion a year enough? The Conservative Government do not have a track record of getting these things right. In 1986 they estimated the initial running cost of the Crown Prosecution Service at £4 million; by 1992 the figure had reached £226 million. The Crown Prosecution Service is certainly not a success story.

Where in the money resolution is there any reference to provision for the police to receive donations and sponsorship? How much is estimated in relation to that power? Sponsorship of local crime prevention or of local work with the young and the old certainly makes sense, especially in the context of partnership. But many commercial organisations, such as Marks and Spencer and

[Mr. Michael]

the Co-operative movement, currently put money into crime prevention and youth projects. Youth Express targets young people on crime issues, thanks to support from Express Newspapers and others.

The provision in the Bill is not needed for such issues. Why is it there? There is no room for complacency under a Government whose neglect has necessitated fund raising for premature baby cots and who neglect the old, the sick and the homeless. On this element there is no costing in the money resolution.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): If the hon. Gentleman were not reading such rubbish so quickly, and if he had reflected on the subject a little longer before starting, he might realise the stupidity of some of the things that he is saying. For instance, he said, in a gabble a couple of minutes ago, that the Crown Prosecution Service certainly was not a success story. If a service that secures a 97 per cent. conviction rate is not a success story, can the hon. Gentleman tell me what is?

Mr. Michael: The hon. Gentleman has just wandered in off the streets. He would be better informed if he had listened to the contributions of hon. Members on both sides of the House who have condemned this measure. In fact, the Crown Prosecution Service has disappointed many people—victims, witnesses and the police—by downgrading or dropping so many cases. If that is a success story, and if it satisfies the hon. Gentleman, perhaps the Bill and its money resolution too will satisfy him. They do not satisfy the standards that the Opposition set, nor do they promise the standard of policing that we and the public expect. Those are the criteria against which the money resolution should be judged.

On law and order, the British public now recognise that it is Labour that sets the agenda and that we are determined to tackle the problems of crime. That must involve making the best use of resources, which, in turn, is best achieved by cutting bureaucracy, rewarding efficiency, supporting local partnership and recognising that the closer to the ground decisions are taken the more effective they will be. If the Prime Minister and his colleagues ever get round to studying language, they will realise that that is what the word "subsidiarity" means. It is not what the Bill offers. In fact, the Bill gives the Government power to go in precisely the opposite direction, both in relation to police powers and in relation to magistrates' powers, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) referred earlier.

For the Bill as a whole, the message must be, "Hands off our police." The prime responsibility of a chief constable—indeed, of every constable—should be to the public and not to the Home Secretary, and certainly not to civil servants. The financial arrangements should reflect that reality, encouraging co-operation and good practice, but recognising that financial management, like leadership, must be local and transparent. We cannot afford the inefficiency and the bureaucratic time-wasting that the Bill will foist on our police. The money resolution is inadequate, vague and flawed and is an unsafe basis for legislation. That is why I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote against it.

10.30 pm

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me. As you know, I was seeking to catch your eye earlier. Owing to Committee commitments, I missed some of the speeches in the Second Reading debate, including that of my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), who I am told made an important speech.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) said, the £21 million that is referred to indirectly in the money resolution is less than adequate and is directed to the wrong targets. If I refer to an issue in Cheshire, the House will understand precisely why the targeting is wrong.

As is well known from published statistics, crime is rising at an alarming rate within Cheshire. I am sure, however, that the House will condemn the irresponsible journalism of the past few days, which sought to denigrate the people of the Blacon area of Chester, which is immediately adjacent to my constituency. It was described as a no-go area. The divisional commander, Mr. Deryck Farmer—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. We are debating the money resolution. If the hon. Member returns to it, he will be in order. *[Interruption.]* I am having great difficulty in hearing what the hon. Member has to say. Many private conversations are taking place. If hon. Members wish to pursue them, there are better places than the Chamber.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have been listening to the hon. Member for Ellsmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller). Is it appropriate for him to raise matters that relate to another Member's constituency without, I presume, giving him notice of his intention to do so? It is my understanding of this place that it is out of order to make such reference unless notice has been given.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) is aware of the courtesies of the House. I do not know whether he informed the hon. Member in question.

Mr. Miller: I am grateful for your intervention, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was about to relate my remarks to the money resolution. My remarks are directed specifically to the costs of policing. I should explain to the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) that the relevant police division is part of my constituency.

It was clear from the reports in the media that the journalists had got things wrong. The published figures show that only 5 per cent. of assaults on the police within Chester occurred within Blacon. That must be compared with the alarmist reporting of the past few days. I am pleased to put on record on behalf of all parties in Chester our criticism of the media in this instance.

If we view more widely the statistics that relate to Cheshire, it is clear that the cost to the electorate is not referred to properly in the money resolution. None of the important statistics that have been published—they show a 188 per cent. increase in robberies in Cheshire since 1989—has been incorporated. None of the huge increase in vehicle crime is reflected in the resolution.

There are enormous costs to society that the Government must take into account. People are paying

huge insurance premiums in the part of the north-west about which I am talking. They are penalised because of the high level of car crime.

Some responsible borough councils are spending their meagre resources in a positive attempt to reduce crime. My borough of Ellesmere Port and Neston is spending part of its resources on installing cameras to reduce crime. If the Government are serious about issues of technology, some of which were referred to earlier, they should take on those responsibilities and seek to assist borough councils such as mine and others in the Chester area with badly needed money.

Like many hon. Members who have spoken, I have spent time with my local police force, where morale is clearly low because resources are poor. The police are unable to work efficiently because vehicles are inadequate, investment in information technology is poor and management structures leave much to be desired. People are working under enormous strain because the Government are not prepared to put sufficient money into the equation. Hence my opening remarks on the money resolution.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth said, the £21 million referred to would help to recruit 1,000 new police officers. Had the hon. Member for Macclesfield remained in his place—this issue is clearly not relevant to his part of Cheshire—he would have agreed that Cheshire needs an increase in the number of police personnel on the beat. That has been shown clearly by the recently published statistics from a number of sources.

Although many issues will be subject to detailed debate in Committee, it is extraordinary that, given the problems that I have described, the Bill is the best that the Government can do. I suppose that clause 23 falls within the context of the money resolution. The notion of sponsored organisations within the police service is ironic. Policemen wearing the same shirts as Manchester United would be perverse and the wrong approach to policing.

The Committee that discussed the deregulation Bill has just dealt with some aspects of the courts. I foresee some interesting conflicts between the sponsorship relationships expected by this Bill and those expected in relation to the courts by the deregulation Bill. Important money issues are associated with those.

The hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) made an unusually incisive intervention in the speech of the Home Secretary in the Second Reading debate about the cost of cutting the number of rural courts. I know from the bench on which my wife sits that two courts have had to be closed. The Minister made it clear that that was the responsibility of the magistrates courts committee, but how can magistrates courts committees expect to run those courts properly, in the interests of the people whom they seek to serve, if the Government fail to give them the necessary resources? The money resolution fails to identify those important issues.

It is no good the Minister simply saying that the issues of amalgamation have been dealt with in a paper that was published some two years ago. Some hard issues are being dealt with today in relation to the cuts in court services, which the Government are underfunding through and through.

After 15 years of Conservative rule, the Government who promised to be the Government of law and order should have put enough money into the equation to reflect the needs of society. They have abysmally failed to do that. The statistics for Cheshire police clearly show as much. Moreover, they have failed to do so in respect of our courts, particularly magistrates courts. I regret to say that the difficulties we face in Cheshire and across the nation will continue until the Government get their act together and give the right priority to policing and to the administration of magistrates courts. That, not the perverse approach adopted in this Bill, is what is needed.

10.40 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): During the main debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) dealt with an important constitutional point about the fact that part II of the Bill contains important amendments to the Police (Scotland) Act 1967. It was a Scottish Act, no doubt certified by the Speaker of the time as such, and dealt with in a Scottish Standing Committee. Almost inevitably, the Standing Committee to which this Bill will be sent will comprise few Scottish Members, despite the constitutional issues that it raises.

The financial effects of the Bill for Scotland are important, too. The money resolution says nothing about what it will cost the Secretary of State for Scotland to implement the Bill. Such a lack of information shows how inadequately Scottish legislation is dealt with in the House.

The memorandum on the financial effects of the Bill tells us:

"The provisions of the Bill relating to Scotland and Northern Ireland will have no significant financial implications."

Yet we know that the Bill provides for grants to be made by the Secretary of State to a police authority in connection with "safeguarding national security", for instance. I accept that the money needed in that connection will vary enormously from year to year, but we must assume that the relevant clause was included for some reason.

Equally, the Bill refers to common services, and to the fact that the Secretary of State may require police forces to use facilities—

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): If the hon. Gentleman will turn to page x of the explanatory and financial memorandum, he will read the following:

"The provisions of the Bill relating to Scotland and Northern Ireland will have no significant financial implications."

Mr. Wallace: I thank the Minister. Had he been listening, he would have heard me read that out a moment ago.

The Bill also allows for police forces to be charged by the Secretary of State for providing some services—yet we are told that it will have no significant financial implications.

Of equal importance to police forces in Scotland will be clause 43, the first clause relating to Scotland and to the constitution of its police forces, which removes certain ranks from their hierarchy. We have been told that that is designed to promote efficiency. Yet, I repeat, the memorandum claims that there are no significant financial implications. That means that there will be no savings of significance either—so why in all the world are the police forces of Scotland being forced to go through all these changes?

Sheehy's recommendation of the greater use of management structures failed to take into account the fact that the police make up a body that requires a chain of

[Mr. Wallace]

command. My constituency is a good case in point: it is important, in such a remote area, to have a person—in this instance, a chief inspector—who has overall authority. Many of the police officers in Scotland do not want to embark on these massive changes, which, we are told, will ultimately in any event have "no significant financial implications". That is a measure of how irrelevant the provisions are for policing in Scotland. It is yet another example of Scottish legislation being treated in a second-rate way.

I have no doubt that what is being done is constitutionally correct, but it flies in the face of what the Government promised the Scottish people last year in their White Paper, "Scotland in the Union: a Partnership for Good". In that document, the Government said that they would find ways to try to improve the way in which Scottish Members could scrutinise legislation in the Chamber. The Bill shows a total lack of that, both in terms of its detail on important constitutional matters relating to the police and in terms of its financial implications. It is a shabby way to treat Scotland.

Last week, in the debate on the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), responded to a 90-minute debate with a three-minute speech, which I am sure embarrassed him. That is the way we are being treated, and the people of Scotland will not put up with that for much longer.

10.45 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): In his closing speech on Second Reading, the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department—a title which is a constitutionally unwelcome intrusion in the House—placed great emphasis on local justice. Time after time in relation to magistrates courts, the Minister correctly emphasised that, as did the White Paper, Cmnd.1829, "A new Framework for Local Justice" published by the Lord Chancellor and the then Home Secretary, the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker). In their introduction they mentioned a locally based service, but, just like Scotland, north-east London will not have a locally based service.

The money resolution seeks funds for the administration of justice. The administration of justice by the clerks and their assistants can be distinguished from the dispensing of justice by full-time magistrates or, as is the case in north-east London, by lay magistrates. In relation to London, paragraph 33 of the White Paper to which I have referred states:

> "The present structure of a single service covering the inner London boroughs and ring of separate outer London borough services is not conducive to effective management and coordination with other criminal services. The Government intends to consult further about a new structure for London with a view to primary legislation when possible."

This is the primary legislation.

As I have said, the resolution seeks money for the administration of justice. The Government say that they will concentrate on justice services. The courts serve justice, and services should be organised around their needs and the needs of those who attend them: not the other way round.

The history of magistrates courts in London shows that they are based on two areas—the central area of stipendiary magistrates and the outer London area, of which Newham and north-east London are part, which has lay magistrates. There are currently 20 magistrates committees for the outer London area, of which the borough of Newham has one. I understand that the Government propose to reduce those to four under clause 62.

The London boroughs of Newham, Barking, Havering, Waltham Forest and Redbridge are to be administered using the money voted by the measure, if it is passed, as a single administration.

I emphasise that in my area, party politics and occupational background play no part whatever in the activities of a long-established and well-based magistrates service covering a tightly knit London borough consisting of two former county boroughs. Under the magistrates committee funded by the state, they administer their own services.

I understand that there will be about a dozen people in the magistrates committee. If it covers the five boroughs that are represented by 14 hon. Members, those boroughs will not have control of their own administrative back-up. In their view, and I should think in the view of common sense, the quality of justice, administration and the advice that they are able to give will be diminished.

We all know the importance of local knowledge and of building up a corpus of experience. The fact that the magistrates know the area, the industries, the people—some of whom have been there for many years—and the geography of the area is very important in conducing confidence in those who have to be the subject of justice as well as the administrators.

In voting the money for a change of administrative area by so-called consultation, the Government will be reducing the quality of justice not just in the London borough of Newham, but in the whole of north-east London and, by that token, the confidence of the public in the system of justice.

I suppose it is a constitutional phrase, but we have had errors of administration. The Crown Prosecution Service has been referred to and another great change in administration concerning allowances for children has caused a great deal of worry. If the Government go forward in administering the changes of area in their plans with the money voted in the resolution, they are reducing the standard of justice and, through the Lord Chancellor's Department, crossing the line of separation of powers which alone guarantees the liberty of the subject.

10.51 pm

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): I shall make a few brief remarks about the money resolution, in particular the derisory reference on page 10 of the financial memorandum to the fact that

> "The provisions of the Bill relating to Scotland and Northern Ireland will have no significant financial implications."

If the Minister of State at the Scottish Office had consulted police officers, chief constables and those involved in police authorities in Scotland, they would certainly tell him that the Bill will have serious financial implications for Scotland.

Scotland has been treated shabbily with regard to criminal justice. Simultaneously, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, the Local Government etc. (Scotland)

Bill and the Police and Magistrates' Court Bill, all taking a piecemeal approach to the criminal justice system in Scotland, are all going through the House.

Clauses 34 and 35 of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill allow the Secretary of State for Scotland to amalgamate forces without consulting the public. That provision is contained in a local government Bill. It should not be there; it should have a separate criminal justice Bill of its own. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill addressed the issues of prisons and privatisation. Again, that should have had a Bill all on its own.

In Scotland we are doing quite well with our criminal justice system. Our crime rates are down for the past two years in succession because of the distinctive Scottish approach. The message for the Government is, "If the system ain't broke, don't fix it".

The reorganisation of local government will almost certainly cost the police and criminal justice service dearly. For example, the Minister at the Scottish Office mentioned joint boards made up from elected members within the constituent authorities and said that costs would be apportioned among the constituent councils according to the costs of policing within the area.

That statement drew alarm from the chief constable of Strathclyde region because it is impossible for the police to detail in advance how much it will cost; all the facilities are demand led and the considerable central support services such as air support, police dogs, mounted branch and underwater search units cannot be programmed in advance, only afterwards. The Government have a lot to answer for in relation to that.

Scotland has its distinctive system, but what is currently happening in the Home Office is that the demand for centralisation and the buzz words—what is a core function?—will have serious financial implications.

The Government would do more justice to Scotland if they gave it more than a few misleading lines in this Bill claiming that there are no financial implications. I spoke to two chief constables in Scotland at the weekend. They said that the Government's approach in reorganising local government and the police forces in Scotland means that there will be severe financial implications. That is shameful.

Scotland has been treated badly with this piecemeal approach and the Government will get their just rewards at the polls. A system that is working well should not be tampered with and the message that is coming out of Scotland at the moment is that the Government are tampering with the system there at their peril.

10.54 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): The contributions in this brief debate have been entirely unsurprising. The contributions made by the hon. Members for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller), for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) and for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) seemed to lack something as a result of their not having been present for the Second Reading debate. They seemed to be revisiting a Second Reading debate which they did not attend.

Mr. Michael: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wardle: I will give way in a moment.

I can tell the hon. Member for Newham, South that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, in his closing comments, explained that the aim of the constructive discussions that the Lord Chancellor's Department is having with outer London courts representatives is to seek arrangements which release the benefits of a larger administrative area without amalgamation of the magistrates courts committees.

Because the hour is late and time is short, I shall not be tempted to discuss crime prevention as the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) did, except to say that the Government spend some £200 million across Whitehall on crime prevention. I shall not dwell long, as he has tempted me to do, on the South Wales police authority to which he alluded. If anyone has a track record in getting things wrong it is the South Wales police authority and the three Glamorgan county councils, which comprise that police authority. It is their financial miscalculation and the low priority that they give to policing which have led to the inadequate funding of that force.

The hon. Gentleman talked about the broad principles of the Bill. I want to say a few words about the purpose of the Bill in the context of the money resolution. The Bill is intended to improve the organisation and management of the police so that they are better able to combat crime and to strengthen the administration of magistrates courts.

Changes in the management structure will allow police authorities and forces to make more efficient use—a point that the House will heed—of the more than £6,000 million already spent annually on policing. The Bill is concerned primarily with the way in which existing resources are used.

Establishing new police authorities and equipping forces to cope with their increased management responsibilities will necessarily involve some start-up costs. A one-off provision of £21 million will be made available to support that. To put that in perspective, it may be worth pointing out that that one-off provision is the equivalent of about one third of 1 per cent. of the current annual expenditure on the police. It is an investment in the future of the police service and is in line with the recommendations of the Audit Commission. Its report on financial management in police forces said:

"Only with adequate financial information and alignment of financial and operational management can forces rise to the challenge of increasing effectiveness".

The investment will help the police to rise to precisely that challenge.

We expect the new police authorities to assume responsibility for policing in their areas from April 1995. To prepare for that, the new authorities will need a period of parallel operation with current police authorities, to ensure a smooth transition. Similarly, forces may need to recruit and train staff in order to prepare for the management tasks that they will take on from April 1995. They may also need new equipment such as computer software.

We propose that £4 million will be available for the running of the new police authorities during that period of parallel operation. It will be divided between each of the 41 relevant authorities. The remaining money, up to a maximum of £17 million, has been earmarked for spending by shadow authorities on new staff and equipment for their force. As some forces are in a better position than others to

[Mr. Wardle]

prepare for their new responsibilities, it is likely that money will be allocated against claims and according to need.

For those reasons, I commend the resolution to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 263, Noes 129.

Division No. 220] **[11pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Egger, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Flanbum, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawksley, Warren
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew MacKay and Mr. Andrew Mitchell.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Cabom, Richard
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie

Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Etherington, Bill
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Heppell, John
Hoey, Kate
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Illsley, Eric
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Michael, Alun
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Otner, William
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle and
Mr. Dennis Turner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill [*Lords*], it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any expenses incurred by a Minister of the Crown under the Act, and

(b) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other enactment; and

(2) the payment of any sums into the Consolidated Fund.

School Expenditure (Gordon)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

11.11 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I am glad to have the opportunity to raise an issue that has caused my constituents and me considerable concern in recent months—indeed, for the past year or so.

Let me put the issue in perspective. Over the past 20 years, my constituency has become the youngest, fastest-growing constituency not only in Scotland but throughout the United Kingdom, with the possible exception of Milton Keynes—and, as the Minister will realise, Milton Keynes has the advantage of being a new town with a development corporation.

When I won my seat in 1983, Gordon's electorate was 65,737; this year it is 84,074—an increase of 18,337, or 27.9 per cent. No other constituency in the country has recorded an increase of that scale. Even since the last election, the growth has been 2,973, or 3.37 per cent., in just over two years.

During that time, we have benefited from prosperity. In 1991, the census year, our per capita income was £11,430—second only to London's. For a number of years, our unemployment has been the lowest in the United Kingdom. However, recent trends in the area are slightly disturbing: over the past three years, unemployment in Gordon has risen by 199 per cent., more than anywhere else in the UK. Rationalisation in the oil industry—and, I have to say, the Government's adverse tax changes—have clearly played a part in that.

In 1991, Grampian's gross domestic product was £5,893 million, representing 1.2 per cent. of the UK total. That means that by now—in the current year—the total Government tax take from the region must exceed £3 billion a year, and that figure excludes oil revenues. When she was Prime Minister, Lady Thatcher was very fond of fighting for the return of what she called "our money" from the European Community; I believe that we in the north-east of Scotland have a case for advancing a similar argument. We make a substantial contribution, and I am not at all sure that we get a fair return for it.

It is true that, in the early years of oil development, an additional infrastructure allowance was made available to the north-east; but that has long since ceased, while population growth continues unabated. Between 1989 and 1992, the Scottish population grew by 0.4 per cent., but Grampian's grew by 3.8 per cent. The number of pupils in local education authority schools in Scotland grew by 1.9 per cent. between September 1989 and 1993, compared with a growth of 4.2 per cent. in Grampian.

The 1991 census showed that, in Gordon district, which is part of my constituency, 23.6 per cent. of the population were aged under 15, compared with a Scottish average of 20.2 per cent. The figure for the whole constituency is not available, but it is probably higher. Added to that, the area continues to have a significant inward migration of families with school-age children.

Since 1976, 10 new primary schools have been opened in Gordon constituency, as well as four new academies—Westhill, Dyce, Kemnay and Oldmachar. The growth of the school population continues at the same rate, meaning

[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]

that we need to expand the capacity of existing schools, and that we will almost certainly need another new academy in the very near future.

Grampian regional council estimates that, to keep up with this demand in terms comparable with the past, it will require a capital investment programme for the whole region of about £12 million to £13 million per year, compared with the £6.5 million per annum allowed by the Scottish Office.

This year, four academies in my constituency have school rolls above their notional capacity. Alford academy has a roll of 552, which is forecast to rise to 564 in 1996, against a notional capacity of 532. Westhill academy has a roll of 887, which is forecast to rise to 934 by 1996, against a notional capacity of 686. Its promised extension has been postponed for a further two years.

Oldmachar academy in Bridge of Don has been roll-capped at 1,087 and it is forecast that the school population will rise to 1,245 by 1996. No permanent extension is planned, and the school provides no community education.

Under the greatest pressure is Ellon academy, whose school board meeting I attended last week. It is the largest school in the Grampian region, and the fourth largest in Scotland. The current roll is 1,626, which is forecast to rise to 1,678 by 1996, against a notional capacity of 1,645—and on a split site which brings special problems.

The education authority estimates that the requirements of the new curriculum effectively reduce the capacity of any school by between 10 per cent. and 14 per cent. In these four schools alone, that means 400 to 500 places, or a total shortfall of between 825 and 985 places in 1996. This pressure is immediate, and it requires action now. It does not take any account of the forecast requirement for 3,000 extra houses currently being discussed in the regional structure plan.

We need to commit further funds for extensions to existing schools now. We need the equivalent of one extra academy now, and the structure plan—whether it is based on a new settlement or the expansion of existing settlements—requires a further new academy.

In addition, with local government reorganisation around the corner, it should also be noted that 750 pupils currently resident in Gordon and scheduled to be in the new Aberdeenshire go to schools in Aberdeen city. If the city wishes to reserve those places for its own pupils in the future, clearly a third academy will be required for the pupils so displaced. Of course, no pupil will be required to move schools, but those currently in primary school may not end up at the academy to which they now expect to go.

One new academy is needed immediately, and probably two more will be needed in the next five years. Planning and budgeting for that should be taking place now. If a new academy costs about £11 million, as has been estimated, clearly a capital consent for the whole of Grampian of £6.5 million per year is inadequate.

As it is, four out of six secondary schools in the Gordon district have temporary classrooms housing 800 pupils at any one time. Temporary accommodation is in use at both Bridge of Don schools, raising the total number of pupils in temporary classrooms in the constituency at any one time to about 1,000. Temporary classrooms do nothing but provide short-term relief. In fact, they increase the pressure on the common facilities which were not designed for the extra numbers.

The situation is most acute at Ellon, where the new academy, built for 1,000 pupils, provides the common facilities for 1,600, criss-crossing a busy road. This also squeezes out other community groups which are desperate for space.

So far, I have identified only the problems of secondary schools, but a number of primary schools have space problems, and there is also controversy about nursery education.

The most acute problems are at Ellon primary school, Westhill and Alford, for which plans have been finalised but for which the capital is not available. In addition, Rayne North, Tipperty, Kemnay and Oyne are all scheduled for investment but face some uncertainty about availability and timing. Forehill and Greenbrae in Bridge of Don also have space problems. Other schools such as Tarves, which has been promised improvements, have been dropped from the programme altogether, and there is also a campaign for a new primary school at Potterton.

Priorities for the allocation of nursery places have sparked a row which will come to a head this week when the council decides the priorities for new nursery classes to be provided this coming August. It is worth recording that, during the 12 years in which the Tories ran Grampian, nursery provision was frozen. They would not open even the units that had been built by Aberdeen county council before its demise.

Following the Conservatives' defeat eight years ago, the Liberal Democrats in administration pressed for a commitment to a rolling programme, which has led to the provision of six new nursery classes a year, providing more than 2,000 extra places, including two mobile units for rural areas—one in my constituency and one in that of the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch). From a starting point of only three nursery schools in the constituency in 1986, there are now 14.

On a wholly objective assessment this year, Insch was identified as the top priority for the next nursery class. However, on the ground that there were accommodation problems, it was dropped down the priority list in favour of other areas. In fact, some capital funding had been put aside especially for the purpose, but it was diverted to less urgent priorities.

Funding has been diverted to areas that were third, eighth, 11th and 28th in the council's priority listings, all areas of SNP or Labour representation. I am proud to say that at least the Liberal Democrats in administration have always supported the application of fair and objective criteria, and will do so again when, as I confidently predict, they take over the lead in the administration after next week's elections.

Currently, 740 children have places at nursery school, with 120 on waiting lists. Overall, that is substantially thanks to the Liberal Democrats, but, if we are to achieve fair provision for all children, more resources are needed.

At the moment, provision in Fraserburgh and Banff academies is 58 per cent. and 59 per cent. Forres academy has 40 per cent. provision, whereas Gordon schools have only 28 per cent. provision, and children in the Huntley area may be displaced by pressure from Insch. Therefore, in Gordon we currently face the gerrymandering of the

Labour and SNP administration on the council in respect of the allocation of the capital spending budget for which Grampian region has received Government consents.

However, the situation is made far worse by the total failure to date of the Scottish Office to grasp the pressures that arise from a fast-growing young population spread over a fairly extensive rural area. In recent years, the cost-cutting pressures in the oil industry have led to a rationalisation by a number of oil companies, which has, paradoxically, brought management jobs to Aberdeen while the offshore work force is being reduced.

Some companies have expressed concern about the pressure that such moves have placed on local schools. People are accommodated and welcomed, but more schools in and around Aberdeen are being brought up to their limit, and now face capping. The problems that I have described are most acute in Gordon, but they will increasingly affect the areas of Kincardine and Deeside closest to the city, and other schools within the city of Aberdeen.

The Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), is usually courteous and considerate when hon. Members express concern about problems in their constituencies and he usually wants to help. It is with some sadness, therefore, that I have to say that it has made me very angry that no fewer than five times in the past year he has refused to meet me to discuss what threatens to become a crisis in my constituency in the north-east.

I hope that I have now proved to the Minister that the situation needs his urgent attention and that of his officials. After last week's meeting, I can extend to him a personal invitation from Ellon school board to visit the school and see for himself the problems it faces, especially as pupils are switching between the two sites.

I should sincerely welcome the opportunity to show him around any or all of the schools that I have mentioned, so that he can see for himself why we have good standards, but also why we need an understanding of our future investment needs if we are to maintain them.

To date, the Scottish Office seems well content to take the benefit of what the north-east can contribute to the Scottish economy, but to stop giving back what we are entitled to expect to enable us to maintain that contribution, and to maintain the standards of our education service.

11.24 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) on securing a debate on the important issue of school buildings. I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) is supporting the debate by his presence, as is my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch); the hon. Member for Gordon will appreciate that there are similar problems, arising out of success and a swelling population, in my hon. Friend's constituency.

The hon. Gentleman has written to me expressing his concerns about the capital building programme for Grampian in general, and about the impact on particular schools in his constituency. In the course of that correspondence, he has asked me to meet him to discuss his concerns. I shall try to explain to him in a little more detail why such a meeting has not seemed appropriate so far.

I acknowledge that the hon. Member for Gordon is well informed about matters affecting his constituency. The point is, however, that responsibility for the allocation of capital resources for school buildings in Grampian is a matter for Grampian regional council. It is for the council, not for the Scottish Office, to determine how those resources are spent to meet local needs and circumstances.

It follows, therefore, as I have already told the hon. Gentleman, that for a meeting to be productive it would be important first to know the regional council's latest plans for school provision in Gordon district. As he knows, at the time of my most recent letter to him on the issue, in December 1993, the council had not provided the Scottish Office with detailed information about future provision in the Gordon area.

Before I focus on the individual schools referred to by the hon. Gentleman, it would be helpful if I were to explain the Government's role in local authority school building programmes in Scotland in more detail. Let me first make it clear what our role is not.

When we came to power in 1979, we took the decision substantially to disengage from detailed involvement in local authority decision-making. As a result, neither Ministers nor Scottish Office officials are generally now involved in the detailed consideration of individual school building projects.

The present role of the Scottish Office is twofold. First, it is to determine the broad overall level of capital consent resources that can be made available for school building by authorities in Scotland. Secondly, it is to take decisions on how that total is to be distributed to meet the competing claims of the 12 education authorities.

That process involves a general consideration of the financial plans submitted to us by authorities every year, each of which sets out an authority's proposals for school building over the next five years. Of course, all authorities know the Government's priorities for school building work.

Our first priority is the provision of additional school places where there is insufficient alternative accommodation within reasonable travelling distance—in short, roofs over heads. Our second priority is cost-effective rationalisation—that is, projects designed to reduce the number of surplus places within the existing school system.

In deciding what allocations should be made, we try to ensure that authorities have sufficient resources to make progress with projects that fall within those categories, especially for the provision of new school places where those are required. Account is also taken of the need for authorities to upgrade and refurbish existing buildings, although I acknowledge that there may not be not as much available for that purpose as authorities might wish.

However, as I have said, authorities are free to determine their own school building priorities within the total level of resources available to them. Those resources are not limited to the advisory allocation for educational building notified to them each year.

Authorities are free to add to their allocation in a number of ways. They can switch resources from other capital programmes; they can use receipts from the disposal of assets; they can transfer funding for capital projects from their current expenditure budgets; or they may be able to attract private finance. By those means,

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

authorities, including Grampian, have substantial resources at their disposal to enable them to proceed with projects to which they attach priority.

Of course, I appreciate—

Mr. Malcolm Bruce *rose—*

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: May I develop my argument a little further?

I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman has concerns about particular schools in his constituency. He has referred, for example, to Ellon academy and to Inverurie academy. He has suggested that those pressures could be relieved by building a new secondary school at Oldmeldrum, but it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the merits of that proposition, because Grampian regional council has not included it as a new project in its financial plan. Nor, so far as I am aware, has the council reached any conclusion on that matter.

Therefore, while I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's concerns, he must understand that it is the regional council's responsibility to consider the appropriate level of school provision in its own area. Only when that has been done can the Scottish Office consider the matter in the context of capital allocation levels.

I recognise that—

Mr. Malcolm Bruce *rose—*

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall give way to the hon. Member, but may I develop the argument a little further?

I recognise that the council may be in something of a quandary on future settlement patterns in the region, and I know that it has been considering the possibility of a major new community in different parts of the region in the area around Aberdeen. I understand that various options have been put forward, including, at one time, the suggestion that it may take place to the south-west of Aberdeen.

On the other hand, I also understand that a developer has now suggested that a new development may be centred on Ellon. Running in tandem with all that is the council's review of its structure plan.

In all those circumstances, the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that it is not for me or any other member of the Government to tell the council what it should or should not decide. Although I understand his frustration at the time being taken to reach a decision, it is, as I have said, a matter for the council.

Another point to consider in reaching a decision is the need for a new secondary school in Gordon. Given the current uncertainties, it would be seem prudent for the council to ensure that the decisions that it takes are properly informed. I need hardly remind the hon. Gentleman that, in the past, a number of new schools have been built throughout Scotland which were never in the end occupied to their planned capacities. Such actions have simply served to aggravate the problems of surplus school places in some areas, and do not represent the best value for taxpayers' money.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: May I point out on that last point that four of the new schools built in Gordon to which the Minister refers are the four that are now over their capacity? Far from being under-utilised, they are under extreme pressure.

I accept his argument about the case for the Grampian region to get on with the job. I am sick to death of hearing about new settlements, and I wish that it would settle its structure plan. In the meantime, children and parents are under extreme pressure and need to know that those schools will receive the investment that they need so that the education may be carried out.

The regional council may be able to find some extra funding, but I am sure that the Minister will recognise that £13 million is all that it has consent for until it disappears. One academy would wipe all that out, and would leave nothing for anything else. There is simply not enough money in the pot.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are two points that I shall mention quickly. We shall take into account the kind of points that the hon. Gentleman has made, as well as those made by my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside and those made by hon. Members representing all the other constituencies in Scotland, before we decide the next overall allocation of educational capital investment funding for Scotland in the next public expenditure survey round.

If I may, I shall come in a moment to the allocation for Gordon. Also, I shall respond to the hon. Gentleman's request for a visit in due course, arising from the debate.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the difficulties of running Ellon, partly because the school operates on a split site. In their report on the school, published in April 1992, the inspectors noted that the fact that the school was accommodated on a split site was far from ideal, and that there were other constraints on the accommodation. They also noted that both buildings were well maintained, and that overall accommodation was adequate for the role at that time.

I was pleased to read in the report of the good standards of attainment achieved by the pupils of Ellon academy. I pay tribute to the diligence of the pupils and to the efforts made by the head teacher and staff, which contributed to those achievements. I know that in 1993-94, some 35 per cent. of the school leavers went on to higher education. When compared to the national average of 25 per cent., that is an impressive achievement. Indeed, I am delighted to see that, overall, secondary schools throughout the hon. Gentleman's constituency have achieved above-average results in the school examinations in recent years.

On a rather less happy note, I record how sorry I was to hear of the damage recently caused to the art department by an accidental fire at Oldmachar academy.

The hon. Gentleman also raised the question of accommodation problems at Westhill academy. This school was built in recent times to accommodate pupils from major new housing developments to the west of Aberdeen, but the council identified a need for expansion. The council drew this to the attention of the Scottish Office, where it has been recognised for some years that this would qualify as a "roofs over heads" priority. But I understand that, in the interim, the council may have decided to defer the project. That would, of course, be a matter entirely for the council.

I should like to turn now to the overall level of resources available to Grampian regional council. The council's advisory allocation for educational building in 1994-95 is £6.7 million. That is a substantial figure, to which, as I have said, the council is free to add in various ways. As a

share of the total resources available for allocation to authorities, it is also close to its share of the Scottish population.

It is not, therefore, the case that Grampian is being treated unfairly, or less generously than other authorities, in the allocations that it receives. Indeed, in the past, the council received a higher proportion of the total resources available than its population share.

In each of the years from 1977-78 to 1985-86, the council was allocated up to twice the share it would have received if allocations had been made on the basis of population. That reflected the need for new school buildings, on a "roofs over heads" basis, arising from oil-related development in Grampian. Several new schools were built in Gordon district, including Westhill academy and the new part of Ellon academy. This underlines the responsiveness of the capital allocations system to identified school-building needs.

However, it also emphasises the uncertainties that can arise in predicting local population trends and long-term school building requirements. That is why it is important for the regional council to examine carefully the real needs for the future. If the authority were, in due course, to make a clear case for a new secondary school in Gordon district, I have no doubt that, as has been the case in the past, we should ensure that its capital consent allocations were at a level that could accommodate such "roofs over heads" needs.

I have already said that it is most certainly not the case that Grampian regional council has been unfairly treated in the distribution of capital consent resources for educational building. The hon. Gentleman may, however, take the view that the council pays insufficient attention to the needs in Gordon district compared with other parts of the region. It is not for me to comment on that, as capital allocations are not project-specific. As I have said, it is for the authority, with its detailed knowledge of local needs and circumstances, to determine its detailed spending priorities.

The hon. Gentleman has also asked whether the overall level of resources is adequate to meet all the council's demands for capital expenditure. Of course many people would wish for more resources to be made available for local authority school building work, as for many other programmes, but there are not unlimited resources. The Government have to balance competing demands right across the public sector.

Between 1988 and 1993, we were able to increase by some 35 per cent. the capital consent resources available for educational building. That is a substantial increase, particularly given our other spending priorities over the period. For the current financial year, we have also held the allocation at the same level as was announced in March 1993 for the 1993-94 financial year. That means, for Scotland as a whole, that the capital allocation for school building stands at £71.5 million—a very substantial sum, by any standards.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will appreciate from what I have said that I do understand the reasons for his concerns. I have already said that the Secretary of State and I will wish to consider with great care the allocation of capital resources for school building in general in the next public expenditure round. Nevertheless, I appreciate the points that the hon. Gentleman has made. If he still wishes to meet me to discuss these matters I shall be happy to agree to a meeting. In the first instance, I strongly advise him to follow these matters up with the Grampian regional council, where certain points have to be resolved initially.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: I am grateful to the Minister for the detail that he has gone into, and I accept much of what he is saying in principle. He talked about £71 million. If we take pro rata the contribution to the economy that is made by the Grampian region, a £6.5 million capital allocation is not comparable.

As for population, it is the youth population that matters, not the overall structure of the population. In my area, we have more school-age children than in other parts of the region.

As I have said, I am grateful to the Minister. I wish to meet him to discuss these matters in more detail. He said earlier that he might wish to take advantage of the opportunity to visit my constituency. I hope that he will do so, because I shall be delighted to show him what I and others are talking about—both the quality of what we have and the pressures we face.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his invitation. I shall, if I may, respond to it in due course.

I recognise that the area has problems that arise from a growing population. I must recognise also that, in the first instance, we must deal with local democracy. As the hon. Gentleman appreciates, that is his first port of call. When the region has made its plans and proposals clear, it is much easier for the Scottish Office to focus with great clarity on what is required.

As for the overall allocation of resources for school building, we shall examine it with the greatest possible care in the next round—

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at nineteen minutes to Twelve midnight.

House of Commons

Wednesday 27 April 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CROSSRAIL BILL

Ordered,

That the Committee on the Crossrail Bill have leave to visit and inspect the site of the proposed works and areas affected by the proposed works, provided that no evidence shall be taken in the course of such visit and that any party who has made an appearance before the Committee be permitted to attend by its Counsel, Agent or other representative.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Pan Am Flight 103

1. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received concerning the extradition of those persons alleged to have committed the murders of the passengers and crew of Pan Am flight 103 and residents of Lockerbie in December 1988; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): I have received no recent representations concerning the extradition of the two accused, who are Libyan nationals; neither has my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Advocate. It is now well over two years since warrants were issued for the arrest of the two accused. We have given comprehensive assurances about the fairness of a trial in Scotland and the pre-trial conditions for the accused. The Libyan Government should comply with the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and hand the two accused over for trial without further delay.

Dr. Godman: Many people believe that the men who committed those murders over and in Lockerbie will never be brought to trial anywhere. Is it true that the Lord Advocate and the Government now have evidence concerning Syrian and Iranian involvement in this terrible affair? If so, surely sanctions against Libya have reached the end of the road. Why is the Lord Advocate so hostile to the concept of the creation of an ad hoc international tribunal presided over by a senior Scots judge, to judge the persons accused of this terrible crime?

Mr. Lang: The accused can be assured of an absolutely fair trial in Scotland. There is no indication that any alternative arrangement would be any more acceptable to the Libyan Government than what is currently proposed. As for evidence involving other countries or other accused, I can tell the hon. Gentleman that my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Advocate has not seen any evidence that would cause him not to proceed with the criminal charges that have already been brought.

Homelessness, Glasgow

2. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he plans to meet Glasgow city housing department to discuss the resources available to tackle homelessness.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I visit Glasgow and the west central belt regularly on housing matters. Glasgow district council has received a total gross housing capital allocation of over £121 million in 1994-95. That is a significant increase on last year, and will enable it to continue to tackle homelessness as a priority issue, as I have requested.

Mr. Watson: Apart from the last phrase, the Minister's answer made no mention of homelessness. That is part of the problem. Last year, 15,000 people presented themselves to Glasgow city council's housing department as homeless; more than 2,000 of them were 16 to 17-year-olds, who do not even have the right to claim any benefits.

Glasgow city council has made it clear in a number of submissions to the Minister that it believes it needs much more in terms of borrowing facilities to enable it to deal with the problem properly. Given that a number of those homeless people have such status largely as a result of the Government's policies—directly or indirectly—when will the Minister face up to his responsibilities on behalf of the homeless not only of Glasgow but of Scotland as a whole?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: All local authorities, including Glasgow, have been asked to give very high priority to dealing with homelessness. That is one of the strategic issues with which it is asked to deal, along with stock that is below the tolerable standard, dampness and care in the community.

This year, Glasgow's resources will total more than £120 million in both housing revenue and non-housing revenue accounts. Scottish Homes is also being asked to give top priority to homelessness and will be active throughout the housing associations in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. Top priority must continue to be given to this pressing subject.

Mr. Gallie: My hon. Friend referred to the importance of the housing associations in the battle against homelessness. Will he confirm that some £1 billion has been spent through the housing associations recently, creating some 50,000 units through building and renovation? Will he also confirm that the greatest proportion has indeed been spent in Glasgow?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My hon. Friend has made a good point. About £500,000 has been spent on housing associations in Glasgow—which, at one stage, was nearly half the total expenditure on housing associations. They are now relevant to Scotland as a whole, and we are tackling deprivation everywhere. I believe that the washing involved helped to make Glasgow a great deal

cleaner, and many more units were provided for homeless people. The Hamish Allan centre is also performing an invaluable role in Glasgow.

Mrs. Fyfe: Does the Minister realise that the Scottish Homes target of 2,500 homes directly and indirectly provided for Scotland as a whole still leaves tens of thousands of families without a home to call their own? Does he realise that, 13 years ago, district councils built 7,000 houses in one year but that in 1992 they were so strapped for cash thanks to the Government that they could only build 1,650? When will the Minister tackle his responsibilities instead of toying with them?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The strategic responsibility will remain that of local authorities, and rightly so. Since 1979, more than 257,000 houses have been built in Scotland. Scottish Homes is right to provide units for the homeless and it is of course concentrating on furnished accommodation, which will be of considerable assistance. I believe that Glasgow is taking its statutory responsibilities seriously and is giving considerable assistance to those who need it.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn *rose—*

Hon. Members: Cheerio.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Has an hon. Member resigned?

My hon. Friend the Minister will remember that, during the last Scottish Question Time, I asked how many houses owned by local authorities were not occupied. Does not the number of unoccupied houses far exceed the number of people who want to be housed?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I cannot give my hon. and learned Friend the exact figure, but I understand that in the region of 26,000 to 28,000 local authority houses are vacant. Some authorities have a higher percentage of vacant houses than others and we are strongly urging them to bring those properties back into use. My hon. and learned Friend makes an extremely relevant point. We also have a determined drive to bring back into use empty houses in the private sector and, through Scottish Homes, we are providing funding for that purpose. Scottish Homes has lead tenancy arrangements to enable housing associations to let property to homeless families, and empty private property is being used for that purpose.

Fish Farming

3. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had about the situation in the fish farming industry.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): My right hon. Friend and I have received many representations from Scottish salmon farmers about the market and have had a number of constructive meetings with industry representatives to discuss it.

Sir Russell Johnston: But, after all that, is the Minister satisfied that the Norwegians do not use concealed subsidies, severely distorting the market price? Why is he obdurately opposed to producer-funded producer organisations, which most people in the industry believe are the only sensible way to keep a reasonable balance between supply and demand?

Sir Hector Monro: I believe that the subject of the hon. Gentleman's first point is a matter for the European Commission. We have encouraged the industry to present the evidence to the Commission, which is considering whether to examine it formally. We are in close touch with the industry. I went to Norway to meet the Norwegian Fisheries Minister and, since then, we have managed to effect a meeting between representatives of the Scottish and Norwegian industries to discuss the major problem of oversupply and the fact that far too many smelts are going into the sea.

Employment Practices

4. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will issue guidelines on the employment practices of Scottish councils.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no specific locus in the employment practices of local authorities. It is therefore not appropriate for him to issue guidelines on the subject.

Mr. Oppenheim: We may have to be indulgent when it comes to some of the quainter customs of Scottish Labour politics, but is not one of the quirkier practices that of issuing pink application forms to general applicants for jobs on Monklands district council but green application forms to friends and close relatives of its councillors? Does that novel application of the share and share alike principle explain why so many close friends and relatives of Monklands Labour councillors have jobs on the council? Now that at least some councillors have been honourable enough to stand up against the practice, should not we expect Monklands Members of Parliament to show the same concern about the socialist can of worms on their own doorstep?

Mr. Stewart: As my hon. Friend knows, there has been a continuing silence from Opposition Members on the effect on their constituents of those and similar practices. I understand, however, that the practice that my hon. Friend rightly describes as novel has been abandoned, or at least suspended.

Mr. Ernie Ross: If the Minister is so concerned about the alleged employment practices of local authorities in Scotland, why did he make such a ridiculous statement at the recent conference of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy? He knows that, because of his proposals for the reorganisation of Scottish councils, more than 100,000 local government employees in Scotland are extremely concerned about their employment. Would not it help if he made a statement today saying that those people will be covered by the European Union acquired rights directive, thereby giving peace of mind to employees who do a worthwhile job for all of us in Scotland?

Mr. Stewart: I have paid tribute again and again to the work of Scottish local government employees. I am not sure which of the statements that I made at the conference the hon. Gentleman meant, but I announced there a number

of additional members of the committee that will advise the Secretary of State on matters relating to the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill, and I believe that the nominations were widely accepted as objective.

Mr. Bill Walker: Is my hon. Friend aware of the great concern in Scotland about the revelations that constantly appear in the Scottish press about the employment practices at Monklands? Too many people are now employed by local government to perform specific narrow duties; they are really doing jobs that have been created for friends. Is not it time that my hon. Friend and the Secretary of State took powers to deal with those problems?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend makes the interesting suggestion that the Secretary of State should take additional powers in such matters. Perhaps some of the Opposition Members who have been pressing on the subject will give their full support to any endeavour to take such powers. The Secretary of State's present powers are limited, however. No doubt Opposition Members who regard Monklands district council as a model of perfection and a model of how Scottish Labour authorities should work, will have been confirmed in their belief in the excellence of that council by the recent "Newsnight" coverage.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. Let us move things on more rapidly.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Does the Minister accept that there is continuing concern in the city of Aberdeen about the unsatisfactory nature of the recent termination of the chief executive's contract of employment, at a cost of nearly £300,000 to the local community? Does he accept that it is not satisfactory that such a matter should be left entirely to a local council which many people feel has failed to discharge its duties, and that there is no means of securing an independent inquiry? Does not he believe that the rules should be changed to allow for that?

Mr. Stewart: As I said when the hon. Gentleman raised that matter before, I accept his concern about Aberdeen —a concern which has also been expressed across the party political divide. My right hon. Friend and I have examined the Scottish Office's powers in the matter, and my right hon. Friend simply has no locus at present. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to suggest specific legislative changes, we will of course consider them.

Forestry Commission

5. **Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the Government's proposals for the future of the Forestry Commission in Scotland.

6. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the future of the Forestry Commission.

Mr. Lang: My fellow forestry Ministers and I are currently considering the report of the forestry review group, and will make an announcement in due course.

Mr. Clarke: A few months ago, I asked the same question of the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro). My constituents and employees at the world-renowned Bush estates research establishment in Midlothian are wondering what the future holds. Many people in rural areas depend on the Forestry Commission. We are being drip-fed by the press on supposed future changes in non-privatisation policies affecting the commission. The Government have had long enough to consider the matter, and the public are entitled to know what are the Government's policies on a matter that is is of major importance in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I am not responsible for speculation in the columns of the press, but I agree with the hon. Gentleman that among the many considerations that must be taken into account in deciding the way forward for the commission are the circumstances of the many dedicated staff who work for it throughout Scotland. I am keen to remove as soon as possible any uncertainty that exists. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees that it is important not just to make decisions soon but to get them right.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Does my right hon. Friend agree that virtually every industry that we privatised in the 1980s and 1990s has been successful? The reason is that those privatisations brought about a change in management culture. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the important point in respect of the Forestry Commission is not who owns the land but whether public rights of access are maintained and the forests are managed in an environmentally friendly manner?

Mr. Lang: I agree with my hon. Friend that what matters most for the forestry industry's future is that decisions affecting it are taken in the context of the industry's interests. That includes not only the commercial development and growth of our forests but environmental and recreational considerations, including access, and the need to encourage more planting. We are taking all those issues and others carefully into account in working towards a solution.

Mr. McFall: It is clear that the Government took no account of public opinion from the outset. It took a campaign before the Government surrendered in the face of public opinion. More than 300,000 acres in Scotland have been sold since 1981.

Madam Speaker: Order. Is there a question coming? I have not heard one. Hon. Members should begin with a question, not a statement.

Mr. McFall: Given that the forestry review group's report has been with the Secretary of State for more than two months, will he address the concerns felt in Scotland, so that the public may be reassured that the Government will not achieve by the back door that which the public manifestly do not want them to achieve by the front door?

Mr. Lang: We are keen to take on board all the representations that we have received and continue to receive. We have received 3,600 representations from individuals, and 600 organisations have made their views plain to us. All are being carefully considered. When we bring forward our proposals in due course, members of the public and others will have an opportunity to react to them.

Mr. Kynoch: When my right hon. Friend considers the review group's report, will he bear in mind the singular importance of so-called community woodlands—those at the edge of villages and towns, such as Pannanich woodlands at Ballater in my constituency? Access for the

general public, residents and tourists is extremely important for recreational and leisure activities. Will my right hon. Friend ensure that my constituents enjoy future security of access?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend raises an important point. I assure him that, in our consideration of the way forward, we are taking close account of the importance of community woodlands.

Mr. Maclennan: Does the Secretary of State accept the view of the timber industry that the overwhelming requirement at this time is for more trees to be planted —not to have land sold off, which would divert resources from what is properly required?

Mr. Lang: I agree that the interests of the timber industry are important in our consideration of the issues. The importance of encouraging more planting is central to the way forward. The review group's terms of reference specifically included the need to consider the operation of incentives.

Sir Thomas Arnold: Will my right hon. Friend agree, in the interests of open government, to publish the review group's report?

Mr. Lang: No, we do not propose to publish the report, because the internal review group comprised officials who advise Ministers. However, we shall publish our proposals and there will be plenty of opportunity for all aspects to be fully considered in due course.

Highlands and Islands

7. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the economic prospects of the highlands and islands.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am confident that the economic regeneration and diversification currently evident throughout the highlands and islands will continue to flourish as the wider economic recovery being assisted by this Government's policies gathers momentum.

Mr. Macdonald: In the light of the massive defence cuts that are being reported in the newspapers this week, when is there likely to be an announcement on the Royal Artillery range at Benbecula? Does the Minister agree that the range provides excellent and unique facilities for the armed forces, with the full support of the local community? Does he recognise that there is a strong case for its consolidation and expansion, with the use of more contracting out, rather than any talk of cuts or closure?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The matter is still being carefully considered. I understand that a decision is expected in about July. I was present when the hon. Gentleman took a delegation from the Western Isles to see my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement at the Ministry of Defence. I think that it would be fair to say that the delegation stressed, as did the hon. Gentleman, the importance of employment as well as the excellent arrangements that currently exist. No argument was missed. Indeed, mention was even made of the fact that the presence of the artillery range afforded protection for rare bird species, including waders, in the area. I do not think that any arguments were missed.

Mr. Fabricant: Is my hon. Friend aware that representatives of the Scottish tourist board, which is funded by the Scottish Office, recently came to the House to address members of the Conservative Back-Bench tourism committee? Will he applaud the efforts of the board to promote the highlands and islands in the United States of America and in Canada, which will in turn promote the economic interests of the area?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Yes, indeed. The Western Isles will have a growing tourist industry, which is extremely important to them. Tourism is the largest employer in Scotland, and that employment is growing. It is not the largest employer elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Developments such as the tourist centre at the Callanish stones—the Scottish version of Stonehenge—will attract up to 50,000 visitors to the Western Isles every year. The opening of the Skye bridge will greatly benefit the Western Isles through enormously increased tourism.

Mr. Charles Kennedy: On the question of the Skye bridge, does the Minister accept that the benefit to the Western Isles, to Skye or to the highlands and islands generally will not be helped by the sky-high tolls that the Scottish Office will foist on local people? What will he do to remove that burden and to ensure that objective 1 funding for roads and infrastructure generally is genuine additional funding? We have already seen cuts in the roads budgets for the Highland region since the arrival of objective 1 funding.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As the hon. Gentleman knows, objective 1 funding will be additional. The bridge tolls will not be higher than the present ferry fares, so nobody will lose. If passenger traffic increases, as we anticipate, there may be scope for adjusting the tolls accordingly. We shall know more about that once the bridge is open. When the tolls have paid off the costs, it will be a free bridge. That is the quickest way the islanders of Skye will ever get a free bridge.

Mr. Trimble: Does the Minister agree that the prospects for the highlands and islands could be improved if the European Community's interregional programme on maritime borders were amended to include maritime regions? Will he join us in trying to persuade the Department of Trade and Industry, which is supposed to represent the entire United Kingdom on this issue, to persuade the Community to amend the Interreg programme to include maritime regions?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that interesting representation, which I will be sure to discuss with my colleagues in the Department of Trade and Industry. He will appreciate that I do not have lead responsibility. One of a Minister's first rules is that he should not exceed his responsibilities. I shall, however, follow up the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. John Marshall: Is my hon. Friend aware that this afternoon we have heard of something more remarkable than the conversion of St. Paul on the road to Damascus? Does he appreciate that the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) is now opposed to defence cuts and in favour of contracting out? How much further will the Labour party go?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Attitudes have changed considerably over the 14 years since Margaret

Thatcher came to power. The goalposts have moved significantly. That will be of great significance to our country in future.

Damp Housing, Glasgow

8. **Mr. Davidson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to meet representatives of community councils and tenants' associations to discuss the problems of damp housing in Glasgow, with particular reference to the Govan constituency.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has no plans to meet community councils and tenants' associations to discuss damp housing in Glasgow. In the first instance, it is for the City of Glasgow district council to assess the housing needs of its area and to set out its plans for tackling damp housing in the housing plan and capital programme, which it submits to the the Scottish Office.

The council's gross capital allocations for investment in public and private housing total £121.25 million in the current year.

Mr. Davidson: Does the Minister accept that there is a problem of dampness in Glasgow and in my constituency? Does he accept that the money that the Government are allowing the council to spend is inadequate? Does he agree that he should be prepared to meet delegations of those who live in damp housing so that they can explain to him the effect that it has on their lives, the lives of their families and the educational opportunities of their youngsters? Will he not walk by on the other side?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have been acutely aware of the problem since serving on a Select Committee that considered dampness in council houses in Scotland. Since that time, substantial progress has been made. Damp housing is the biggest issue facing housing authorities. They are right to target their efforts to where the problem is most severe. Through the urban regeneration initiatives in Fergushe Park and Castlemilk, we have proved that that can be done successfully. Housing authorities have to phase and prioritise the work, which will be successfully completed but cannot all be done overnight.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Have not the Government invested a large amount of money in housing improvements in Scotland? Having spent £2.2 billion on housing improvements over the years, would not it be more sensible to ensure that authorities keep their rents at a sensible level so that they can invest in improving the declining number of houses that they still own, while people who have bought their houses make their own improvements at no cost to the public purse?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. In past years, rents have been so low that less has been spent on management and maintenance. If more had been spent on it, there would be less dampness in houses. I confirm that about £900 million is being spent on capital investment in housing. That includes the work of Scottish Homes, the new towns and the local authorities. A lot can be done with £900 million in a year. The work must be prioritised and the most severe problems tackled effectively.

Mr. Wray: Why have the Government been encouraging local authorities in Scotland to implement Rachmanism by allowing them to collect rents for houses that are below tolerable standards? Why do they encourage local authorities not to tell people of their rights under the Public Health (Scotland) Act 1897?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Local authorities have been told that houses that are below tolerable standards must be one of their top four priorities. The hon. Member uses the word "Rachmanism" in relation to public sector authorities. That used to be a slur on the private sector, but I accept that housing that is below tolerable standards must be rooted out wherever it arises.

Local Services

9. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to meet the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss local services.

12. **Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss the provision of local services.

Mr. Stewart: As I informed the House on 23 March, my right hon. Friend and I are next scheduled to meet representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on 17 June as part of the normal consultation on local government finance matters.

Mr. Dunnachie: I wish to ask the Minister the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross), but to which he received no reply. When the reorganisation in local authorities takes place, will the Minister guarantee that the employees of local authorities will be covered by the European Union acquired rights directive, which will protect their wages, service and conditions, and pensions in the event that they are transferred to another employer?

Mr. Stewart: As I said in the Standing Committee, to which I know I am not allowed to refer, and as I have said on many occasions, the overwhelming number of local authority employees will be transferred to the new authorities.

Of course, in the case of the acquired rights directive, certain cases may have to be decided by the courts. I have, however, made absolutely clear the position in respect of the overwhelming number of local authority employees. We have also set up a staff advisory committee and commission which will examine these and related problems.

Mr. McMaster: As you know, Madam Speaker, I am not one to curry favour, but may I preface my question by wishing you many happy returns on this, the second anniversary of your speakership?

Does the Minister accept that more and more people throughout Scotland do not trust the Tories on taxes, on local government or on their plans for water? Does he realise that people throughout Scotland—no matter what he may claim—believe that these super-quangos will be the building blocks for privatisation? Why does no one believe him?

Mr. Stewart: May we entirely associate ourselves, Madam Speaker, with the hon. Gentleman's first remarks?

I must make it absolutely clear that the Government have no plans to privatise water and sewerage services in Scotland, through the front door, the back door or any other door.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Does my hon. Friend agree that a move to all-purpose, single-tier local authorities will result in more accountable, more local, more responsive, more sensitive and more cost-effective service delivery in the towns and cities of Scotland?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is right. All political parties in Scotland at one time or another have supported the principle of single-tier authorities, because of all the advantages to which my hon. Friend has alluded. It is significant that in his area, the city of Aberdeen, the proposals for a unitary city authority have, as I understand it, been supported by every political party.

Mr. McAllion: When the Minister meets COSLA will he tell it why, after 15 years of Conservative Government, there are still tens of thousands of homeless Scots, hundreds of thousands of Scottish homes riddled with damp and condensation and acute shortages of decent, affordable houses for rent? Is it because the Government's housing policies are succeeding or because they are failing? The people have a right to know.

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for housing has already dealt with that subject, but we shall certainly point out to COSLA that aggregate external finance—Government assistance to Scottish local authorities—per head of population is 46 per cent. higher in Scotland than in England and 24 per cent. higher in Scotland than in Wales. These are the real figures; they demonstrate beyond peradventure the Government's commitment to local authority services in Scotland.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Will my hon. Friend remind the Opposition that those houses were all built by local authorities under socialist control and were probably designed by socialist planners—and that if there is any complaint about them it should be directed to those who got it so wrong?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. and learned Friend is absolutely right. The problems to which Opposition Members have referred are overwhelmingly to be found in socialist-built estates, put up after the last war—that is, within the last generation. The Labour councils that built them entertained misconceived ideas about the sort of living conditions and quality of life that people in Scotland increasingly want. People want a variety of tenure types and it is our policy to provide such a variety.

Mr. Wallace: The Minister said again that the Government do not propose to privatise Scotland's water. In response to the Strathclyde referendum the hon. Gentleman said that the Scottish people either did not understand or did not believe that. Why do the Government have such a crisis of credibility in Scotland?

Mr. Stewart: I do not believe that the Government in any way have a crisis of credibility in Scotland. The principle of single-tier authorities is widely popular. The hon. Gentleman's own experience as the Member of Parliament for a constituency including two island authorities should suggest to him that the excellent experience there could be effectively translated to mainland Scotland.

Mr. Salmond: Can the Minister give an example of a quasi-democratic Government anywhere that has ever reacted with such arrogance and contempt to an expression of popular will as has marked the Government's response to the million-plus Scots who voted in the water ballot? Does he have no sense of shame at the fact that when we should all be celebrating the rebirth of democracy in South Africa we are witnessing the death of local democracy in Scotland?

Mr. Wilson: What an obscene comparison.

Mr. Stewart: I think that I agree with the sedentary intervention.

Of course every hon. Member welcomes the rebirth of democracy in South Africa and wishes that country well. The hon. Gentleman's comparison is absolutely absurd and will not be generally accepted by supporters of the mainstream political parties in Scotland.

Mr. George Robertson: Is not it revealing that yet again, for the third month running, the Secretary of State for Scotland has chosen to pass the buck for answering questions on local government—the very centrepiece of the legislative programme that is before him? When the Minister meets COSLA, will he be ready for the anger and disgust that that body will show at what the Government propose to do to Scotland's water? Does he not yet appreciate that all the promises about privatisation that are being made by a Government tainted by their deceit on taxation can never convince the Scottish people that water will not eventually end up in the hands of people who will seek to make profits from it? The people of Scotland want their precious, unique and plentiful supplies of water to be in the hands of locally elected, locally accountable representatives, not in the dubious care of the hand-picked cronies of the Conservative party, and they will express that view next Thursday in the regional elections.

Mr. Stewart: There is a question specifically about water further down on the Order Paper. However, I put it to the hon. Gentleman that the deceit on this issue is the continuing deceit of Opposition Members, who try to pretend to people in Scotland that the Government's proposals are quite different from what they very clearly are.

Sheltered Housing, Glasgow

10. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans Scottish Homes has to build sheltered housing in Glasgow.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In 1993-94, Scottish Homes invested £3.5 million in sheltered housing projects for the elderly in Glasgow. In the current year, this provision is expected to increase to £4.5 million. Over the two-year period, this represents the provision of 146 additional units.

Mr. Martin: May I draw the attention of the Under-Secretary of State to the Royston road district in my constituency, where there are several housing estates—the Charles street flats, Blochairn and, further up the road, Germiston? Many of the residents have lived there all their

lives—some of the housing is pre-war—and now require sheltered accommodation. I urge the Minister to ask Scottish Homes to put some of the £4 million into an area that badly needs sheltered housing. In fact, there is not a single sheltered housing project there.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I will make inquiries on the hon. Gentleman's behalf to see whether this can be done or could be fitted into a future programme as soon as practicable and will let him know how I get on. This year, the provision for special needs projects in Glasgow is expected to be about £12 million overall.

Local Government Reform

11. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest estimate of the transitional costs of local government reform.

Mr. Lang: My latest estimate of the transitional costs of local government reform is that they will be considerably outweighed by savings as the new councils become established.

Mr. Dalyell: I return to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. Dunnachie). What categories of individuals affected by the acquired rights directive do the Government have in mind when they say that they have to go to court?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman should look at the reply already given by my hon. Friend the Minister. The hon. Gentleman's question is about the estimated transitional costs of local government reform. I have already said that they will be far outweighed by savings. For example, Angus anticipates savings of £8.5 million over 15 years, while the Borders region expects £22 million over the same period.

Mr. Norman Hogg: In reply to an earlier question from my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross), the Under-Secretary of State said that he could not recall the detail of his speech to the CIPFA conference. Indeed, it was an unmemorable speech. However, the hon. Gentleman said that in the reorganisation of local government, local authority staff should—I think this was the phrase—go for management buy-outs if their jobs were under threat. What sort of advice is that for local government officials who have served local government well? In addition, would not that add to the costs of the reorganisation, which in any event are likely to get out of hand?

Mr. Lang: When the hon. Gentleman checks the official record of my hon. Friend's speech, he will realise that he did not represent his words accurately.

On the hon. Gentleman's question about the future of local authority staff, my hon. Friend made it quite clear that the vast majority will transfer to new local authorities. The Opposition's estimates of the costs of local government reform are specifically and largely related to implied redundancies, which are likely to be relatively limited. However, to the extent that they do lead to additional costs, those will be more than outweighed—and in the longer term substantially outweighed—by subsequent savings.

Mr. McLeish: Why are the Government deliberately flouting European legislation by refusing to transfer all local authority employees to the new unitary councils? If every one of the 300,000 local government work force was transferred, along with TUPE and the acquired rights directives, there would be no financial savings from the reorganisation. Would not that further wreck the Government's crumbling credibility on this disastrous, divisive and highly dangerous piece of legislation? Or is it just another piece of irresponsible behaviour by the Government, who are willing to put the workers, their families and their livelihoods into the political arena? How can the Secretary of State genuinely want to save 30,000 jobs if he is putting them on the scrapheap of Scotland, where there are already 230,000 people looking for work?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is clearly confused and muddled about the whole exercise. Redundancies probably will result from local government reform. Indeed, I think it desirable that local authorities should be run more efficiently. We should halve the number of local authorities. To the extent that there are redundancies, those will lead to more substantial savings. The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways.

European Regional Fund

13. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total value of grants that Scotland has received from the European regional fund since its inception.

Mr. Stewart: Since the inception of the European regional development fund in 1975, Scotland has benefited from awards totalling almost £1.2 billion.

Sir David Knox: Does not that show the European Community's commitment, through the structural funds, to Scotland's needs? Can my hon. Friend tell us how different parts of Scotland will benefit over the next few years?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is right to point to the figures, which underline the European Community's commitment to Scotland through those funds. He asked about the benefits over the next few years. The highlands and islands will receive £240 million over six years, under objective 1 status. The west and east of Scotland will receive £330 million between them over the next three years, under objective 2 status. As my hon. Friend the Minister for Industry announced earlier this week, £108 million will be available to Dumfries and Galloway, Borders, north and west Grampian and rural Stirling and uplands Tayside over the next six years, under objective 5b status. That shows that there will be significant benefits throughout Scotland.

Ms Rachel Squire: Does the Minister agree that no amount of European regional funding can compensate the Scottish economy, and particularly the Fife economy, for the Government's anti-Rosyth bias and for the broken promises and policies which have led to mass unemployment? Does he further agree that no amount of European regional funds can compensate for the loss of 6,712 jobs which are related to Rosyth naval base? Will he commit himself to ensuring that the Prime Minister keeps the clear and categorical commitment that he made in 1991 that Rosyth naval base would stay operational?

Mr. Stewart: I wholly reject the hon. Lady's allegation that the Government are in some way anti-Rosyth. The case for the dockyard and the base has been put forward with great vigour by my right hon. and hon. Friends.

In relation to the specific question of the future of the naval base, the hon. Lady will know from the statement of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence that the Ministry is examining all aspects of defence support activity, of which naval infrastructure is just one area. It is regrettable that there has been a great deal of what I fear may be damaging speculation.

Mr. Bill Walker: Is my hon. Friend aware that, while I welcome the money from the European Union that will come to uplands Tayside, I do not forget that every pound which comes from the European Union costs the taxpayers in the United Kingdom in excess of £1.60 to get it back? Is not it important to recognise that we are getting our own money back, albeit considerably reduced in value?

Mr. Stewart: I do not want to get involved in an extended answer to my hon. Friend's arithmetic. His views on the matter are always put with great vigour and robustness, but I am glad that he welcomes the assistance to north Tayside and his constituency.

Mr. Kirkwood: While I welcome the capital allocation from Europe that the Minister has just announced in terms of objective 5b for the Borders, may I ask the Minister to accept that the cuts in capital consents for the Borders region for next year make it impossible—nearly—for the council to take any advantage of those funds because, of course, European funds must be matched from national resources?

Mr. Stewart: European structural funding for the Borders, as elsewhere, is fully additional to the bodies which receive it, and for local authorities that means additional section 94 consent. Matching funding, to which the hon. Gentleman is referring, must come from each organisation's existing capital expenditure plans. I believe that that acts to encourage value for money from European-funded projects.

Mr. George Robertson: May I return to the statement by the Minister on the damaging speculation about Rosyth, especially in relation to potential claims against the European regional fund? I agree with the Minister that the speculation about Rosyth is extremely damaging, and no more damaging than to the thousands of human beings in that part of the world whose jobs depend on it.

I remind the Minister of the words of the Secretary of State for Scotland in 1991:

"I am glad that the Prime Minister has recognised the strength of the arguments for Rosyth and the case I advanced in support".

Will the pledges about Rosyth be repeated here today? Will the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Minister tell the House that they stand by the commitments to Rosyth, or will this go down as yet another broken promise in the encyclopaedia of deception of which the Government are guilty?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman is being pretty ingenious—but, of course, in order—in asking that question in relation to European regional development funds. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence have made the position absolutely clear.

Scottish Water

14. Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with Scottish local water authorities over the future of Scottish Water.

Mr. Lang: Many local authorities responded during the Government's extensive public consultation last year. It is regrettable that they have been prevented from having constructive discussion with the Scottish Office by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities' campaign of non-co-operation.

Mr. McKelvey: Nevertheless, does not the Secretary of State begin to get more than an inkling that the people of Scotland simply do not trust the Government on their future plans for water? They're no' daft. They have observed what happened in England. The water boards that were set up were replaced by quangos and the water was then flogged off. The results were higher prices and thousands of people deprived of a water supply. We will not tolerate that in Scotland. If the Secretary of State wishes to allay the fears of people in Scotland, why does not he scrap the present plans for water or, if we must have boards, let them have a majority of elected councillors or other elected representatives.

Mr. Lang: The reform of the water and sewerage industry in Scotland is driven by the fact that, with the disappearance of many regional authorities, it is necessary to find new arrangements to ensure that water and sewerage are delivered as efficiently and cheaply as possible. That is the motive behind the establishment of three publicly owned water authorities. Privatisation is not part of that plan and does not enter into our considerations.

Mr. Gallie: Will my right hon. Friend accept my welcome for the three publicly owned water and sewerage authorities in Scotland? Does he anticipate, as I do, a better service for my constituents as a consequence, particularly when one thinks of the sewerage provisions? Beaches in my constituency have been branded among the dirtiest in Europe. Strathclyde plans to build, rather belatedly, a sewage plant up against new housing, behind a beach and beneath Greenan castle. Surely things can only get better.

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must put a question. I want Members to be brisk. I have said so many times.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is right. It is precisely to take account of the need for new investment such as that identified by my hon. Friend that we propose the development of the three new publicly owned water authorities.

Mr. Foulkes: The Secretary of State has again ruled out the privatisation of water. Will he confirm that the new quangos would have power to franchise out all or some of their services to private companies? Will he rule that out as well?

Mr. Lang: I certainly will not rule out the attraction of private sector finance into the industry. That is one of the reasons why we went for the system that we did. To enable the public water authorities to raise money in the private sector for new capital investment while they continue to control and own the assets of the industry is precisely the way to relieve the pressure on the Scottish Office block and

prevent the need to take money away from housing, roads, health, education and all the other matters that the hon. Gentleman and his party regard as so important.

Mr. Galbraith: Will the Secretary of State give an undertaking that the members of the new water and sewerage boards will all be elected? What does the Secretary of State have against democracy? Is it just that every time he tries it, he loses?

Mr. Lang: I am a strong supporter of democracy, as my record bears testimony to and as the local government results on 5 May will demonstrate. Membership of the water authorities and other matters are still to be decided, but there will certainly be local authority representation on them, alongside the necessary skills that we shall need from the business community to ensure the efficient operation of those authorities for the benefit of consumers.

Woodland

15. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of the United Kingdom is covered in woodland; and what was the figure in 1964 and 1980.

Sir Hector Monro: About 10 per cent of the United Kingdom is covered by woodland. The proportion was 7 per cent. in 1964 and 9 per cent. in 1980.

Mr. Pawsey: I thank my hon. Friend for an extremely helpful reply. I am sure that it will please all Members. Why has that increase taken place and what steps will he take to ensure that the amount of woodland continues to grow? Does he agree that woodland is a valuable wildlife habitat?

Sir Hector Monro: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend's latter point. It is important that we enhance the environment through Forestry Commission and private woodlands. One of the responsibilities of the review group has been to advise on incentives to increase planting by giving that careful consideration and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will report to the House in due course. We need to increase planting, especially of conifers, to ensure a healthy timber industry in the future.

Mr. Worthington: Is not it true that most of the forests that were sold off did not have access agreements, so people have been denied access to the countryside? Will the Minister undertake that, whatever is proposed for the control of forests, freedom to roam and access are not merely one of the considerations, but the top consideration?

Sir Hector Monro: I accept the hon. Gentleman's point. Only one access agreement has been reached with a local authority because local authorities have been slow to discuss the matter with us and to come to management agreements. That will be an important part of my right hon. Friend's consideration of the review group's advice. Access has a very high priority.

House of Commons Emblem

3.30 pm

Madam Speaker: I undertook, in response to a point of order yesterday, to make a statement on the rules relating to the use of the House emblem for party political purposes. Those rules are clearly set out in the "Members Handbook" and in a separate leaflet published by the Serjeant at Arms. They make it clear that the designs and symbols of the House should not be used for purposes to which such authentication is inappropriate or where there is a risk that their use might wrongly be regarded as having the authority of the House.

In particular, neither the crowned portcullis nor the royal arms, whether or not associated with the words "House of Commons", may be used

"in connection with . . . supporting the return of any person to public office."

The application of those rules rests on the good sense of individual Members. Where they have any doubt about their application, Members should consult the Serjeant at Arms.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy (Liverpool, Broadgreen): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I have listened carefully to your statement, and I have received the letter that you sent to me. I am grateful for your response and for your defence of the rights and privileges associated with being a Member of this House.

However, can you confirm that, in 1986, the then leader of the Liberal party gave the same explanation for an exactly similar breach of the rules in an election campaign, and was reprimanded in the same way? I ask for your guidance as to whether that conduct could be construed as a deliberate and calculated campaign to distort the rules of this House, and whether it is a contempt.

Mr. Peter Kilfoyle (Liverpool, Walton): Further to my point of order yesterday, Madam Speaker. Can you confirm that, having received the letter in which you asked me for evidence that the breach of the rules was on-going, I have given you today the names and addresses of constituents in Liverpool who have received the same letter with the same letterhead since the undertaking given to you?

Madam Speaker: I received the later undertaking some time around lunchtime—at about the same time as the hon. Gentleman sent me a letter. I believe that the dates in his letter are not clear, but I have not yet had an opportunity to examine his correspondence.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Just a moment.

I think that I have made a very clear statement today. If any Members have any criticism of another Member of this House, the usual procedure is to refer the matter to an appropriate Committee or to table a substantive motion about the Member's behaviour. That is the way in which we have always proceeded. If the two hon. Members who represent Liverpool are not satisfied, that is the way in which they must proceed.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: As far as the Chair is concerned, that is the end of the matter. If there is another point of order, I am willing to hear it, but that matter is closed.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is it another point of order?

Mr. Burns: It is a general point and is not specifically to do with the point—

Madam Speaker: It had better be a different point of order, because I have just made a statement to the House and the hon. Gentleman is not entitled to raise that matter again. Is he going to rethink? I shall ask him to resume his seat if he is raising that same point of order again.

Mr. Burns: As it is a general point of order, I will try not to test your patience, Madam Speaker. If it is perceived that an hon. Member has, unintentionally or otherwise, made a mistake according to the rules of the House, is it customary for that hon. Member then to apologise to the House for the mistake that has been made?

Madam Speaker: That is a rather hypothetical question. I hope that most hon. Members would have sufficient good manners to do that, but I am afraid that during my Speakership they have not always done so.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. There is, with your permission, another way to proceed about this matter.

Madam Speaker: I hope that my authority is not being challenged by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Faulds: I am trying to back it up, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: That makes a change. I will hear the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Faulds: Madam Speaker, as you know, I have been a long-time supporter, colleague and admirer—I love you dearly. But I do have a simple resolution to the problem. There has been persistent misuse of this emblem over my many years in the House. There is one way that it could be satisfactorily resolved. The House of Commons emblem should be branded on the left or right haunch of hon. Members, depending on their party affiliation, when they have offended.

Madam Speaker: As usual, that is a frivolous remark from the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I have taken into account what you have said, but I would like you to clarify one point. If, before the local elections, I sent a letter on House of Commons paper to the constituents of another hon. Member with the intention of ensuring the election of, say, a Labour candidate over a Liberal Democrat candidate, would I be in order?

Madam Speaker: Perhaps I should repeat the words so that they are very clear. In particular, neither the crowned portcullis nor the royal arms, whether or not associated with. . . the words "House of Commons", may be used "in connection with . . . supporting the return of any person to public office."

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. On this historic day in South Africa, would it not be a good idea to get hold of one of those pieces of paper with the House of Commons crest and send congratulations to Nelson Mandela on behalf of those of us

who supported him in his long campaign to end apartheid and to get the vote? You would be doing a wonderful job if you sent it on behalf of those who wish to send such a letter. I will find you such a piece of paper if you do not have any—or I will borrow it from the hon. Gentleman.

Madam Speaker: As a matter of fact, I do not think I have that sort of notepaper; I have only my own notepaper, which carries the Speaker's emblem.

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Given the point that you have already made about the politicisation of the portcullis and crown, do you not believe that there could be a saving to the House—and indeed a depoliticisation—if we just stuck to using paper with a green emblem instead of having blue and red also?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is taking me to pastures new, about which I shall make no comment at this time.

Company Accounts (Payments to Creditors)

3.38 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to ensure the publication of information relating to the payment of company creditors and to encourage prompt settlement; and for connected purposes.

This is not a new subject—indeed, over the years it has received a great deal of parliamentary and outside attention. One of the purposes of my Bill is to try to ensure more prompt payment within commerce, particularly to small companies, where prompt payment may actually determine their long-term viability.

The background to the Bill is that, in 1992, the Government said in the Budget that they would be prepared to issue two consultation papers—which were subsequently released in January and May 1993—about how to improve prompt payment of creditors in commerce. That decision followed a 1978 Law Commission report about the rate of statutory interest for commercial debts, a 1986 report about payment by the Confederation of British Industry entitled "A Guide to Good Practice", as well as a great deal of parliamentary activity in the last few years.

That culminated in the Interest on Debts Bill for commercial contracts, which was introduced in 1990 by the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates). It also resulted in an early-day motion, which had the support of hon. Members on both sides of the House—as does my Bill—and was signed by no fewer than 129 Members. That early-day motion was tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton), who is now Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs at the Department of Trade and Industry.

I appreciate that the Government are consulting on how to improve prompt payment in commerce, because it is a significant problem, particularly for smaller companies. The CBI has estimated that, at any one time, those companies alone are owed £100 million in overdue rather than late debts. *The Times* recently estimated that the cost to industry of late payment is about £1.5 billion a year, which is equal to the entire amount injected into the venture capital industry in any one year.

The problem of late payment primarily affects small companies, for three reasons. First, they do not have the commercial clout to ensure that creditors pay up. That is emphasised to me time and again by small companies in my area. Secondly, the administration for recovering debt is relatively and proportionately much more expensive for small companies. Thirdly, late payment is a particular problem for small companies because they generate a significant number of the new jobs upon which we rely. The labour force survey has estimated that, up until the end of the 1980s, small companies generated 1.85 million jobs—13 times more than those generated by their larger brethren.

If we are to maintain successful small companies and the investment they make, it is crucial that they are paid on time. It has been estimated that 50 per cent. of British companies rely upon short-term debt, so prompt payment is all the more important for them than it is for German companies, where only 14 per cent. rely on such debt.

Prompt payment is a current problem rather than one of the past, because, as we come out of recession, more and more companies want to upgrade their activities, invest in

[Mr. Anthony Coombs]

stock and additional debtors. As a result of such activities those companies will be subject to a certain amount of financial pressure. Trade Indemnity has blamed late payment for the fact that, despite the economic upturn, there was an 11 per cent. rise in first quarter business failures compared with the previous three months. That is why Trade Indemnity's chief economist, William Simpson, has said:

"For two quarters the running, average value of unpaid debt has risen. The scale of unpaid debt threatens many otherwise successful firms, despite economic recovery."

Many possible solutions to the problem have been suggested. One of the most important is the attempt to try to change the culture within which people trade. Richard Brucciani, chairman of the CBI's smaller firms council, has said:

"The problem of late payment requires a change of culture and attitude in business, and a published statement of corporate payment policy"—

that is one of the two suggestions in my Bill—

"would give suppliers a useful insight into this."

Because of the shortage of time, I will not describe the possible solutions proposed by the Federation of Small Businesses, the CBI and the Government to promote prompt payment. One of the most prominent of those suggestions, however, is the imposition of a statutory rate of interest on overdue debts, but opinion on the desirability of such a solution is not unanimous. It appears that the Confederation of British Industry and the Institute of Directors are prepared to support it, although the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales, the Federation of Small Businesses and the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants all have reservations.

A statutory rate of interest would have many disadvantages. It would require companies to undertake additional administration. It might institutionalise late payment, rewarding it by a statutory rate of interest, in the sense that it is likely to be informally ignored by small companies which want further business from their larger customers. It has not been noticeably successful in encouraging prompt payment in France or Germany, where it currently operates. Hence I make two proposals today, which are simple and which do something to change the business culture in the way that I have described.

My first proposal is that every public company—public companies are generally synonymous with larger companies—should be required to make a statement of its payment patterns and its payment policy in its audited accounts. If it is a conglomerate, it would have to do it on a subsidiary or a sectoral basis.

The CBI has suggested a specific form of statement:

"It is this company's policy to negotiate payment terms with suppliers at the outset of the deal and to pay within the time scale agreed."

In a sense, that says everything and nothing. It is peace and motherhood; it is a statement of good intentions. Although I am sure that we shall all be happy with it, people wish to know not only whether companies sign up to prompt payment, especially the larger companies, but whether they carry it out in practice. That is why my second proposal is crucial if we are to change the culture in the way that we have described.

My second proposal is that every public company should be required to publish an analysis of the aging of its creditors in its public accounts, so that creditors or shareholders or institutions or the general public can see to what extent its practice matches its rhetoric. There are many ways of doing that. The Institute of Chartered Accountants, in its reply to the Government consultation document, mentioned three. They all have different drawbacks and different benefits.

I am absolutely sure that it is not beyond the wit of the accountancy profession to come up with an easily understandable, reasonably consistent, way of describing the aging of creditors and the way in which firms fulfil the pledges they give about prompt payments in their company accounts that would allow potential customers to decide whether it was worth while dealing with those companies in advance rather than after the event, as would be the case with the statutory rate of interest.

My view is that, in the sense that it would give forewarning to small companies of late payment of debt, that would be a valuable measure. I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Anthony Coombs, Mr. Michael Colvin, Mr. Nigel Griffiths, Sir Anthony Durant, Mr. Bob Dunn, Mr. Malcolm Bruce, Mr. Keith Mans, Mr. David Evans, Mr. Sebastian Coe, Mr. John Sykes, Mr. David Martin, Mr. Simon Burns.

Company Accounts (Payments to Creditors)

Mr. Anthony Coombs accordingly presented a Bill to ensure the publication of information relating to the payment of company creditors and to encourage prompt settlement; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 20 May, and to be printed. [Bill 100.]

Orders of the Day

Intelligence Services Bill [*Lords*]

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New clause 1

TRADE UNION RIGHTS (GCHQ)

'In fulfilling the functions specified in section 3 of this Act, staff at GCHQ shall enjoy trade union rights in accordance with Convention 87 of the International Labour Organisation.'.—[*Dr. John Cunningham.*]

Brought up, and read the First time.

3.49 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

This is not a new issue; indeed, it is a long-standing issue, and one on which Government and Opposition are completely divided. It involves what we consider to be the fundamental right of everyone to belong to a trade union: that is a basic principle in any democracy, and we make no apology for reasserting our view on it today.

In 1949, the United Kingdom ratified convention 87 of the International Labour Organisation, which set out this right along with many others. From the time of that Labour Government onwards—through many Conservative Administrations—that presented no problems to us as a nation; only in 1984 did the Conservative Government led by Lady Thatcher decide to remove the right from a group of workers at the Government communications headquarters at Cheltenham.

Understandably and properly, those people have been fighting for its re-establishment ever since—with the support of the Labour party, the Trades Union Congress and, I believe, the Liberal party, along with other parliamentary parties—in the face of the consistent and obstinate opposition of an obdurate Government. The new clause would re-establish the right unequivocally.

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): The right hon. Gentleman has stated in very broad terms that everyone has the right to join a trade union. Is he seriously suggesting that members of the armed forces should have such a right? That would go well beyond the terms of the International Labour Organisation convention, quite apart from being rather a startling proposition.

Dr. Cunningham: In fact, it would not terrify me if they had such a right. In this instance, however, it was arbitrarily removed from people who had formerly enjoyed it.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): It was not removed arbitrarily.

Hon. Members: Yes, it was.

Dr. Cunningham: As usual, the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) is intervening from a sedentary position. He says that the action was not arbitrary, but it was taken without consultation. It was pointed out in the courts that the decision was against all natural justice: if that is not arbitrary, I do not know what is.

The matter has been discussed at great length over the years, most recently in 1993. It is to the credit of the unions involved that they have been willing to make considerable concessions about ring-fencing the members involved and no-strike agreements; they have gone as far as anyone could realistically expect them to go in trying to meet the point on which the Government insisted.

Originally, the Government's position was that trade union membership somehow presented a threat to the security of our country, which was patent and absolute nonsense. No one ever explained why men and women at GCHQ who belonged to trade unions were a threat to our security, while members of the First Division Association in Whitehall—an organisation affiliated to the TUC, and probably handling a much greater volume of more sensitive and secret information—remained perfectly acceptable, and presented no such threat. That completely exposed the fallacy of the Government's argument.

The concessions were offered during a series of discussions, first with the Cabinet Secretary and then with the Prime Minister himself. The Prime Minister retreated to the position that being a member of a trade union at GCHQ would present a "conflict of loyalty." That is another general phrase that has not been defined or explained. If a conflict of loyalty is involved in belonging to a trade union at GCHQ, why does not the same apply to the Ministry of Defence and, indeed, the Cabinet Office?

That was simply another excuse to get the Government out of having to concede that the decision was wrong in principle when it was made, that it remains wrong in principle and that it has become a kind of political totem pole for a Conservative Government, and a Conservative party, with no credible or respectable arguments or evidence to support their position.

That puts Britain in a unique and unenviable position. Alone among western democracies, Britain has been isolated because it is in conflict with not only convention 87 of the ILO but that body's decision in 1991, when the conference voted by 160 to one against Britain. A decision similar to that taken by the Government has not been and would not be contemplated by any of our neighbours and partners in the European Union, by the United States of America or by any other democratic country.

A further bit of double-speak, if that is the appropriate phrase—it generally is for Ministers of this Government—is that the Government are sometimes moved to express criticism of other countries' human rights records. We often join the Government in doing so, but the reality is that, as long as the ban persists, the Government's own human rights record will always be open to criticism, and that criticism will continue.

It was recently the 10th anniversary of the decision, first, to remove the right to trade union membership, and, secondly, to dismiss a number of people from their employment when they refused to surrender what they regarded as an inalienable right for them, their colleagues and for people in general. That anniversary was commemorated in a rally, and we wish to make it clear—it is obvious, in any event—that those people and the unions that represent them intend to continue their campaign until they have succeeded in their aim.

It is now clear to them, and, I think, to the country at large, that they will succeed only when the Government have left office and been replaced by a Labour Government who will restore rights to people working at GCHQ. We would lose no time in doing so.

It is not tenable for the Government to persist in their mulish obstinacy, especially as, following the discussions

that took place and the concessions that were made, there is not a shred of evidence to suggest that Britain's security would be threatened in any way if the Government were finally to admit that they had made a mistake, and reversed their decision.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): My right hon. Friend may remember that, on the 10th anniversary of the decision, I was given leave, after a Division, to bring in a ten-minute Bill. Will he take this opportunity to pay tribute to the 14 employees who were sacked because they refused to give up their trade union membership but who defended their principles, as dissidents have done in different circumstances in, for example, the Soviet Union? Those people continue their campaign to this day. Are they not the very best of our citizens, people who refuse to be intimidated but who stand up for their principles and wait for the time when victory will be theirs?

Dr. Cunningham: I certainly pay tribute to those men and women, because they are willing to make sacrifices to fight for what they believe to be right. It is exactly such people—those with determination and principles—that our country needs above all others. It is on such determination to defend democratic rights and principles that our long-term survival as a democratic society depends. They deserve a generous and fulsome tribute and they have it from the Labour party as a whole and from its individual members. We shall continue to give them the support which my hon. Friend has outlined, and which was so admirably conveyed to the House when he introduced his Bill.

Both in Britain and in the international community, the Government have no arguments, no friends and no credibility on this issue. They have no reason not to admit that the original decision was wrong, and was a violation of people's democratic rights—one that could easily be corrected without people being further humiliated by the Government's claim that somehow they simply could not be trusted to safeguard the interests of our country.

We regard that as not only nonsense but a real denial of the long and honourable record of so many people who worked at GCHQ, precisely because they were interested in defending the democratic rights of our country and of all its citizens.

Mr. Allason: Does the right hon. Gentleman not accept that the Government's decision was not arbitrary, but was a response to a specific request initiated by Sir Brian Tovey, who was then director of GCHQ, that the Government should ban unions if they were unable to give the assurances required following the industrial action taken when the Soviets imposed martial law in Poland and invaded Afghanistan?

Dr. Cunningham: I have already dealt once with the hon. Gentleman's assertion that the decision was not arbitrary. It was arbitrary, and a judge in court decided that it was. As for the merits or otherwise of industrial action, that matter is behind us now.

Mr. Allason: Ah.

Dr. Cunningham: The hon. Gentleman knows as well as I do about the discussions between the Cabinet Secretary and representatives of the unions, and the discussions involving the Prime Minister. In those discussions, the unions gave undertakings that they stand by. Even if I conceded that there was a problem in the first place, which I do not, there is no such problem any more.

Far more working time is lost at GCHQ because of sickness and other valid reasons for absence from work than has ever been lost because of industrial action. A previous Conservative Secretary of State for Defence, Lord Nott—

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. David Davis): Sir John Nott. He has not got a peerage yet.

Dr. Cunningham: He had better get one soon, because his chances will run out after the next general election.

Sir John Nott is on record as having said unequivocally that at no time had the operational efficiency of GCHQ ever been in jeopardy.

Mr. Douglas French (Gloucester): Is the right hon. Gentleman in a position to identify which of the 14 people referred to by the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick)—the people who declined to give up their trade union membership—took part in the strikes of 1979 to 1981?

Dr. Cunningham: No, but I am not sure why the hon. Gentleman asks. This is not a question of who did and who did not take part in industrial action. People have a legitimate right to take part in industrial action; that is another right in a democratic society.

The fact is that those people stuck to their principles, refused to resign their membership of a union of their choice, and were dismissed as a result. That is the issue of principle here, not whether they or their colleagues were involved in industrial disputes. I suppose that the hon. Gentleman's intervention means that he does not believe that people should have the right to take industrial action in a democratic society. If so, we disagree with him about that too.

Having re-read our exchanges on Second Reading and in Committee, and having studied the record of the negotiations and discussions between the unions and the Government, I can say that the Government have not got a leg to stand on. They have no arguments, no justification, no support and no credibility.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Before the right hon. Gentleman finishes, will he give way?

Dr. Cunningham: I am trying to finish.

Sir Peter Emery: The right hon. Gentleman claimed that the opinion must be for protecting the human rights of the individuals in question. Was not an appeal made to the European Court of Human Rights? If so, what was the outcome?

Dr. Cunningham: The reference to the European Court of Human Rights was rejected, but not on its merits. The application to the International Labour Organisation was supported in international law—the Government are always priding themselves on taking a stance based on international law. Britain is a signatory to the convention but the Government reneged on it. I believe that the matter will, justifiably, return to the ILO later this year. I have no doubt that the case and the democratic rights of the individuals in question will be upheld once more.

The Government have no case in international law or on the basis of democratic rights. They have no evidence to support their allegations about conflict of loyalty. The Government have no supporters and no friends. If they had any sense—sadly, they do not have any of that either—they would accept new clause 1, and we could put this sad, sorry and squalid episode behind us.

Mr. Roger Evans: The right hon. Gentleman began by making the extravagant observation that everybody in a democratic society has a right to join a trade union. If he will pledge a future Labour Government—if ever such a fantastic creature came to office—to permitting trade unions in the armed services of this country, he should clearly say so. When I put it to him that that was perhaps a little embarrassing, or even a little controversial, he sidestepped the question by saying this was a case of taking away existing rights. I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman has some Tory respect for existing rights. That is a reactionary viewpoint but at least one that I respect.

Convention 87, to which a Labour Government signed up, specifically excludes the armed services from its ambit. In most countries, organisations engaged in highly confidential matters—*[Interruption.]* I will happily give way to the right hon. Gentleman.

Dr. Cunningham: I will try to shorten the hon. Gentleman's bogus argument. When people enlist in the armed forces, they do so as volunteers, and they know in advance that the right to union membership does not apply to them.

Mr. Evans: The right hon. Gentleman should try arguing that in France, which has conscription; or in any country where there is conscription. The right hon. Gentleman makes an utterly spurious point. In most countries, an organisation of the type of GCHQ is, rightly and properly, run by the armed services. The fact that it is historically not so in this country in modern times is an accident.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): The hon. Gentleman should investigate the matter a little further. Different categories of people work for the state. Those who work for MI6, for example, are Crown servants—and as such are precluded from joining trade unions. People who join the armed forces know that they are not allowed to join trade unions. The ILO convention specifically acknowledges that provision. Other countries in Europe, such as Holland and France, may allow trade unionists in their armed forces. That is their business and has nothing to do with the argument.

Mr. Evans: I was making the point that a secret intelligence-gathering by interception operation of the type of GCHQ is often run by the armed services in other countries, because such an operation is of fundamental national importance.

Another Labour Government signed up in 1978 to ILO convention 151. Perhaps realising that armed forces and police was too narrow an exemption, it added workers engaged in work of a highly confidential nature. It has always been the Government's case that they are not in breach of those two conventions taken together. At committee and conference level, the ILO has been critical, but it has not appointed a commission of inquiry or taken the British Government to the International Court of Justice, which ultimately would be able to rule on whether there has been a breach of the convention.

Mr. Rogers: Again, the hon. Gentleman has shown appalling ignorance. The ILO did not proceed to take action against the United Kingdom because the British members gave an assurance that they would reconsider the issue. That happened last year. There will be a report again this year because of the way in which the matter was dismissed.

Mr. Evans: More huff and puff by those who wish to create a protest.

The campaign that has been mounted by Opposition Members is wholly without merit. It is an unconvincing argument to liken to the Tolpuddle martyrs the 14 who refused the offers made to them. It is being suggested that the 14 are victims of a democratic process going wrong. In fact, they were paid generous compensation by the Government. The background suggests that there is something extremely odd about the campaign of protest that has been mounted.

If certificates were signed by the Secretary of State under employment protection legislation—the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) did not take this point on board—that would implement the arrangements that the Government have proposed, and were that power to be removed, there would be the possibility of industrial tribunals having jurisdiction to try cases arising out of employment arrangements. That is quite apart from any question of trade union organisation leading to the unacceptable disruption that took place from 1979 to 1981. Anyone who has had any connection with the process of industrial tribunals will be well aware that large amounts of information can be requested properly—it is extremely difficult to stop it being produced by means of public interest immunity certificates—and the entire operation of an organisation can be examined in public.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Is the hon. Gentleman able to cite any industrial tribunal hearing during which the chairman and members of the tribunal rejected an argument founded on national security?

Mr. Evans: I have no doubt that it would be argued powerfully that it was not an issue of national security. That would be the applicant's case. He would argue that he had been unfairly treated for a host of reasons, including the decisions of his superiors and the processes and procedures within the organisation. As a result, everything would be laid bare for the public to see. That would be wrong.

This is an issue of public duties, not of human rights, that bear on those who serve their country in GCHQ extremely well. They should not be allowed to behave in the way in which trade unionists in GCHQ conducted themselves from 1979 to 1981. The Government were driven to do what they did by the needs of the public and the interests of the Government and the state. The argument mounted by Opposition Members is complete nonsense.

Mr. Rogers: I wish that the hon. Gentleman would get his facts right. The industrial disruption to which he refers took place in 1981. The arbitrary reaction, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said,

[Mr. Rogers]

took place in 1984. If the disruption was such a bad thing in 1981, why did the Government wait three years before introducing the banning of trade unions at GCHQ?

Mr. Evans: That was the result of the squawks of protest that Opposition Members managed bogusly to produce. What happened between 1979 and 1981 was unacceptable and remains unacceptable. The clause should be resisted.

Mr. Winnick: There is a basic conflict between Labour Members and Conservative Members. It is unfortunate—I think that my assertion will be proved right—that no Conservative Member will today support the lifting of the ban on trade union organisation at GCHQ. We question the democratic credentials of Tory Members time and time again, and their reaction to this particular issue demonstrates the criticism that we make of them.

Unfortunately, there are far too many Members—certainly this is the position on the Conservative Benches—who do not understand human rights issues. They did not understand human rights issues in South Africa during the long horror of apartheid in that country. Here at home they seem not to understand the basic right of individuals to belong to a trade union at their place of employment.

Until the ban in 1984 the Government had no difficulty with the issue. I know that Conservative Members and the Minister will refer to industrial action, but one thing is certain—and I think that the records will bear this out: no Minister came to the House and complained about what was happening at GCHQ. I agree that the Government were not happy with the industrial action that took place in the early 1980s, but we were not prepared for the statement in the House on 25 January 1984 by the then Foreign Secretary, now Lord Howe, announcing that there would be a ban on all trade unions at GCHQ.

4.15 pm

I said in an intervention during the speech by my right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland that one pays tribute to the 14 who refused to sign. Can one imagine the amount of pressure that there must have been on all employees at GCHQ? I do not criticise those employees—the majority—who signed. They obviously wanted to continue to work. No doubt they took the view that it would have been extremely difficult to find alternative work. Like other people throughout the country, they had commitments. No matter how much they would have liked to have stuck with their trade union membership, in the prevailing circumstances they had no alternative. They did not want a transfer. They wanted to continue the work in which they were experts, so they signed. They were given a certain amount of time to sign the document and some money. If they belonged to a trade union, they had to sign a document giving up that right. It is disgraceful that in our democracy citizens should be forced into the dilemma of whether to stick by their principles or by their jobs.

Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland, I pay tribute to the 14 who refused to sign. They are loyal citizens, as loyal as anyone in the House or outside. They have only the interests of the country at heart. All were extremely skilled in their job. Some were experts and recognised as such. One was an expert in the Chinese language and, from 1984, played a leading role in the campaign for the lifting of the ban.

Some countries have remained under dictatorship, but others have not. In the former communist regimes, there were people like Dr. Sakharov, who reached a point where he could no longer serve the regime because he knew that it was unjust. I may be wrong—one cannot, of course, be certain about such matters—but had those 14 GCHQ workers lived in the Soviet Union, had they been Russians or Soviets, they would have stood out. The matters of principle and justice would have been similar to those they were facing, although the circumstances were very different there. They could not sign the document and allow themselves to be intimidated, even if it cost them their jobs. That is why we pay tribute to those 14.

Conservatives Members may sneer about such people, but we remember those in the last century, such us the Tolpuddle martyrs, who were persecuted and who stood by their principles. I would guess that in years to come the 14 will be seen in the same light. Certainly, I hope that they will live long enough to see their campaign succeed. Indeed, I hope that it will be only two or three years before that happens. A Labour Government will lift the ban.

My right and learned hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition reaffirmed Labour's commitment and made our position clear on the 10th anniversary of the ban when he spoke at Cheltenham. He said that one of the first actions of a Labour Government would be to lift that ban. I have not the slightest doubt that that pledge will be kept. *[Interruption.]* I thought that the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) wanted to intervene, but he does not wish to do so.

When the ban was announced Ministers may have felt that there would be some commotion in the House and at GCHQ—and in the trade union movement—but that it would die down within two or three years. It has not died down, however. On the 10th anniversary of the ban there was the demonstration at Cheltenham. I note that the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) is either nodding or shaking his head—I am not sure which.

One thing is certain: no one can claim that the issue has gone away. It will not go away until victory has been secured. The hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) tried to play down the position of the International Labour Organisation. He tried to give the impression that this was not a matter of great significance. But that is not the view of the ILO, which has clearly said that the British Government seem to be in breach of convention 87.

Time and again in the past 10 years there have been attempts in the ILO to avoid coming to a conclusion on this matter, in the hope that an agreement can be reached between the British Government and the trade unions. Indeed, a meeting took place last December. The unions went to the meeting at Downing street in the hope of reaching an agreement. They were flexible; they were willing to negotiate an agreement that would involve no striking at GCHQ. Even if Conservative Members are right to say that a ban was necessary because of the risk of industrial action—I do not accept that—the unions were saying that they were willing to reach an agreement on union recognition with no industrial action to be taken at GCHQ.

The Government seem to have said that this is not good enough. The Government, I understand, insisted that when unions sign such agreements they must also agree to ban industrial action everywhere by their members. No union could possibly agree to those terms; they would be a denial of basic democratic and union rights.

The Government were clearly not willing to come to an agreement, therefore. The only reason why the Secretary of State for Employment—and previous Secretaries of State—has given the impression that there could ever be an agreement is to prevent the ILO reaching a conclusion on convention 87.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): It would help me if the hon. Gentleman would tell us whether he thinks that the industrial action taken in 1979 was justified. I am not sure of his stance on that.

Mr. Winnick: It is not for me to pass judgment on whether industrial action is right or wrong. Neither I nor other hon. Members are asked for their opinions on such matters. It is not my job to pass judgment. If the hon. Gentleman is genuinely concerned about industrial action at GCHQ, and not just using it as an excuse for a continued ban, the remedy is clear—the unions have offered the sort of agreement that I have described.

Mr. Garnier: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman can see the distinction between the principle that he supports and the question that I have asked him. Does he believe that the industrial action, taken in 1979 before there was any question of a ban, was justified or not? I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has in his time supported a number of cases of industrial action, such as the miners' strike, and has claimed that they were justified or otherwise. I am asking for a simple answer, to see how it informs the principle.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): That was an excessively long intervention.

Mr. Winnick: I will not take lectures from Conservative Members who have never defended trade union rights and who, moreover, sometimes refuse to recognise trade unions in the companies that they run. A Government Whip, the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South-East (Mr. Lightbown), sometimes known as "the heavy", was quoted in my local newspaper—his constituency and mine are not far apart—as having said that he would rather see his factory closed down than recognise trade unions. We need no lectures about trade unions from Conservative Members.

Mr. Rogers: I know that my hon. Friend would not want to pass judgment on anyone taking industrial action. As he has said, it is not his business to do so. I am sure, however, that he would want to tell the hon. Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier) that the action took place as a result of the arbitrary suspension of the pay scheme that was in operation for civil servants. The Government say that the number of man days lost was 10,000. In fact, with 7,000 people working at the establishment, it was just over one. In addition, as only 10 per cent. of GCHQ's business is data collection, there was virtually no loss of any material.

Mr. Winnick: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. People can rest assured that the industrial action was not taken in jest. Trade unions do not take such action in jest. In this case they had good reason to take the action that they took, as has been explained by my hon. Friend.

I want to talk about what happened after the industrial action.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does not the hon. Gentleman recall that on 14 April 1981 the then Secretary of State for Defence asserted that the dispute had not affected operational efficiency or capability in any area?

Mr. Winnick: The hon. and learned Gentleman is right. This remark has been quoted previously. The fact is that work at GCHQ continued despite the industrial action. The real test is what happened in 1982, the year after the action. I refer to the Falklands war. Of course, that conflict could have been avoided if the Government had not sent to the junta political signals giving the impression that the Falklands were not important to Britain. At the time of the war— a year after the industrial action— GCHQ fulfilled its duties. Hon. Members do not have to take just my word—

Mr. Garnier *rose—*

Mr. Winnick: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment. No doubt he will make his own remarks in due course.

When the Falklands war had ended, Sir Brian Tovey, the then director of GCHQ, sent a message to every employee. This occurred a year after the industrial action which, we are told, caused such disruption that GCHQ could not carry out its duties and which, it is asserted, made necessary the ban that occurred three years after the action. Sir Brian Tovey's message said:

> "High level praise. There can be no doubt that this praise has been well deserved. It has been earned by hard and dedicated work by you as individuals."

The great majority of those individuals were trade unionists. A year after the industrial action no Conservative Member—not even the Minister—would have had the effrontery to suggest that the excellent work done by GCHQ during the war was in any way undermined or hampered by trade union membership. No Minister could say anything of the kind and be telling the truth.

Mr. Garnier: The hon. Gentleman has been most courteous in giving way to me, and I shall not interrupt him again. Before leaving the Chamber to attend a meeting of the Select Committee on Home Affairs I invite him to tell us whether he interprets the intervention of his hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) as amounting to justification of the strike that took place in 1979?

Mr. Winnick: The hon. Gentleman seems to be obsessed with industrial action. I doubt whether, in his entire life, he has supported any action by trade unions in defence of their members' jobs. My hon. Friend gave the reason for the action. It is not for me, as a Labour Member of Parliament, to pass judgment, and I do not intend to do so.

If, as I hope, the International Labour Organisation comes to the conclusion that the British Government are in breach of convention 87 it should be noted that no other democracy has been so reprimanded. This would be the first time for any democratic country to be found to be in breach of convention 87. What sort of regimes have been reprimanded for breaches of convention 87? They include El Salvador, Brazil and other dictatorial and tyrannical countries. It will not improve Britain's reputation to be linked to such regimes if the ILO concludes that we have breached that convention.

4.30 pm

I began by saying that a fundamental right is at issue. What divides the two sides of the House is whether people have the right to belong to a trade union. I believe that, in a democracy, people at their place of employment have such a right. Ten years ago, that right was taken away without any justification. I am clear in my mind that the continuing campaign, together with what we are saying today, is fully justified. Of course, the Minister will not budge today. In Committee, there was not even the slightest sign that the Government would budge.

Following a meeting at Downing street last December, the general secretary of the TUC wrote to the ILO explaining what was happening and asking it to proceed accordingly. I hope that it will do so. Unfortunately, our new clause will be lost today, but in the end victory will be ours. No matter how many defeats we suffer now, the time will shortly come—perhaps in two or three years—when there will be another Government who will respect human rights and one of whose first actions will be to ensure that the right that was taken away 10 years ago is restored as quickly as possible.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I had not intended to speak, but there appears to be an accusation that Conservative Members are against trade unions and I do not believe that to be true. Indeed, if trade unions did not exist, the Conservative party would have had to invent them. I hold a trade union record that no other hon. Member has ever achieved: I am the only person who, as a rank-and-file member of a trade union, defeated a member of his own executive to win a seat in this place. I achieved that by defeating Mr. Ian Mikardo in Reading in 1959—so my views about trade unions should not come under any attack.

We need to think seriously about whether it is correct to consider the employees of GCHQ in the same terms as we consider the military. That is the basis of the argument and it is the Government's view that they should be put in the same category. I understand the Opposition's argument that they should be treated separately. One of the dangers of being somewhat independent is that one can often appreciate the arguments on both sides. At this moment, however, the question is which of the arguments is more important to the security of this country.

Mr. Peter Kilfoyle (Liverpool, Walton): The right hon. Gentleman, like other hon. Members here today, did not have the privilege of serving on the Standing Committee. I want to put to him a question that was put to the Minister in Committee. If membership of a trade union at GCHQ is a threat to our national security, how does the right hon. Gentleman view the current practice of market testing—for example, for the maintenance of RAF strike aircraft, which could mean private companies maintaining the engines? Would the same argument—that membership of a trade union is inimical to the interests of national security—apply to the private companies?

Sir Peter Emery: The straight answer to that is no and I shall therefore press on.

I spoke on Second Reading and, although I was not on the Committee, I followed its debates in *Hansard*. The Prime Minister's statement of 13 January is of the greatest importance in considering these questions. My right hon. Friend said:

> **"Against that background, however, I indicated that the Government were prepared to enable the Government Communications Staff Federation, the registered trade union for GCHQ staff, to affiliate to the Council of Civil Service Unions, subject to conditions to guarantee its continuing independence. This would have allowed the staff of GCHQ to be represented in discussions between the Government and the unions on matters affecting the civil service generally in a way in which they are not at present."—[*Official Report*, 13 January 1994; Vol. 235, c. 255.]**

Can my hon. Friend the Minister confirm whether that offer remains?

4.30pm

Mr. David Davis *indicated assent.*

Sir Peter Emery: I see from his nod that it does, and that is important in the balance of the matter. That is a long way from emotive suggestions to the effect that the 14 people were similar to Mr. Sakharov in Russia. I have been to Gorky and seen what Mr. Sakharov had to go through, and there is no comparison. It is important that the House should not debate important matters with such a division of political views. I believe that there is not an absolute division of political views. I believe honestly that both sides want to see what is best for the defence of the country. I do not doubt that at all, and I would not suggest that those on the Opposition Front Bench wanted otherwise. It seems to me that it comes down to a difference of opinion, and how that difference is best summed up.

Mr. Winnick: Let there be no misunderstanding. I made a comparison with the case of the late Dr. Sakharov, but I accepted when I spoke—at least, I hope I did and I will check my remarks—that the circumstances were very different. I was not attempting to compare like with like. I tried to compare—I believe I was right in doing so—the case of Dr. Sakharov, who, under dictatorship conditions, stood by his principles, with that of the 14 who, in a democracy, were willing to sacrifice their jobs because they, too, believed in basic human rights and in justice. I see some likeness between the two cases.

Sir Peter Emery: The hon. Gentleman was clearly not making the sort of suggestions that I thought might have been drawn from his remarks; it is good to have that cleared up.

I return to the question that I put originally: should we treat the employees at GCHQ in the same way as we treat those who are working in the defence and military forces of this country? The Government take the view that we should. I happen to believe—certainly at this moment—that that is the right decision. I urge those who are working at GCHQ to take up the offer made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, which is still open; they could then make specific representations in a normal civil service fashion. I believe that, if that were to happen, the House ought to be satisfied.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I start by paying tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones). He is not here this afternoon as he unfortunately had to attend the funeral of a friend, but he will join us later. It is right to pay tribute to his hard work—both as a councillor in Cheltenham and latterly as the Member of Parliament representing that constituency—on behalf of those at

GCHQ who lost their jobs as a result of the struggle for trade union membership, one of whom is now a Liberal Democrat councillor on the local district council.

John Cook was a communications and cipher operator at GCHQ and is, perhaps, a good talisman for what has occurred there and for what ought to occur in the future. He is one of the 14, and he could hardly be criticised for any suggestion of disloyalty to his country. John Cook was positively vetted and, despite the dispute over trade union membership, has remained loyal to his oath of secrecy, as have all the 14. His loyalty goes without question, as does that of the other 13.

John Cook was a communications and cipher operator on Ascension island during the Falklands war. He worked hard in difficult conditions and with extreme effect, so one understands, while he was there. His loyalty was judged afterwards when he was invited to Buckingham palace to be honoured for his work, yet he is one of the 14 people who lost their jobs because it was thought to be against the national interest that they should be allowed to be members of a trade union.

What Mr. Cook and his colleagues proposed was not some outrageous new theory. They were not claiming some new right. They were not relying on some newly ratified convention from which the Government might have wished to derogate when it was created. Mr. Cook was relying on an established right which he had exercised fairly throughout his period at GCHQ.

Yes, there was an industrial dispute at GCHQ, but it was a lawful one. I do not think that it has ever been suggested that there was any suspicion of illegality about the dispute or the way in which it was conducted. All lawful trade disputes militate against someone's interest. That is in the nature of trade disputes, but they remain lawful in Britain, and rightly so, within certain limits.

Successive Governments had plenty of time to react to the dispute and to say that it redounded in a way which was contrary to the national interest and should be the direct cause of removing the right to trade union membership. However, that did not happen. It was about five years later that the Government decided to abolish—

Mr. Rogers: Three years later.

Mr. Carlile: I am sorry, three years later. It was about three years later that the Government decided to abolish trade union membership at GCHQ. That could hardly be described as a reaction. It seems to me that, in this instance, the Government are simply tilting at windmills—but they are invisible windmills. It is not sufficient to argue that they suddenly discovered that GCHQ should be treated in the same way as the military—with great respect to the right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery). For years —indeed, throughout most of the right hon. Gentleman's distinguished and long membership of the House—the GCHQ work force were members of trade unions without ill effect.

Sir Peter Emery: I do not mean to interrupt the hon. and learned Gentleman's flow, but there is a difference between the time before 10,000 hours of work were lost at GCHQ and the time after it. Until that moment, trade union membership was never questioned but after that moment questions were raised. That was the watershed.

Mr. Carlile: I do not understand that point. If one analyses the time lost in the context of the whole work force of GCHQ, a very small number—a handful—of man years were lost. And it was always a lawful trade dispute.

Dr. John Cunningham: I want to help and support the point that the hon. and learned Gentleman makes. In the period to which the right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) referred, almost 5 million working days were lost at GCHQ. Only 0.2 per cent. of them were lost during the dispute. Far more time was lost because people were absent ill and certainly because at weekends they were not there at all.

Mr. Carlile: The right hon. Gentleman makes his point well. He underlines my point that what occurred was a perfectly normal lawful trade dispute. Nor should we forget that the Intelligence Services Bill deals with the position as it is in 1994. Much has changed in the trade union world since 1978. I suspect that even the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) would admit that to be true, albeit reluctantly. I see that he shrugs his shoulders at that proposition.

Dr. John Cunningham: I am trying not to be drawn into it.

4.45 pm

Mr. Carlile: The fact is that much has changed. We are considering the position in 1994. There have been the highest level negotiations between those who wish to be trade unionists at GCHQ, the trade unions and the Government. Undertakings have been given—I have not heard the Minister suggest that they were dishonourably given—that GCHQ would be able to function securely, as it always has in the past, and that there would not be disruption at GCHQ through industrial action. I do not know what more the Government can ask. I really do not know at what windmill the Government are tilting. What are they afraid of?

We have heard two cogent speeches from Conservative Back-Bench Members, but neither of them identified a single item that could cause the Government even so much as concern if trade union membership were permitted at GCHQ.

The hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) may be right. There may be no technical breach of the International Labour Organisation conventions, but that has not yet been determined, nor is it the issue. The issue is the principle whether it is right that workpeople who were more loyal to this country than most workpeople are ever asked to be should have been removed from their job, their rights and their livelihood because the Government did not like the notion of having trade unions at GCHQ.

Mr. Rogers: With all due respect to the hon. and learned Gentleman, the workers who participated in industrial action at GCHQ were not disloyal in any way. It is important to emphasise that national security was never put at risk and that at GCHQ—this is one of the things that are not always obvious, certainly to Conservative Members, who never even try to find out—only 10 per cent. of the work force is involved in data collection. When the industrial action took place, none of the members involved in strategic data collection went on strike. The fundamental process of GCHQ continued right through that one-day industrial action.

Mr. Carlile: I have made the point twice that none of the workers at GCHQ was disloyal. Indeed, I think that I am right in saying that it has never been claimed that a single worker at GCHQ was disloyal. *[Interruption.]* The Government have never claimed with an iota of evidence to show any disloyalty or any effect of any alleged disloyalty.

I would find the arguments of the hon. Member for Monmouth more convincing if there were some evidence of a single incident of disloyalty that affected the interests of this country in any significant way. Perhaps I can best close my remarks by referring to the words of the then Secretary of State for Defence, now Sir John Nott. One notes that he has not been given the ermine shawl—perhaps because he has been a little too frank in expressing his views about the performance of the Government of which he was a member. He said that the dispute at GCHQ had not

"in any way affected operational capability in any area."—[*Official Report*, 14 April 1981; Vol. 3, c. 136.]

If that was true—

Mr. French: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Carlile: No. I have almost finished. If Mr. Nott was stating the facts accurately to the House, why are the Government spending so much time raking over the coals of a lawful industrial dispute that took place about 15 years ago?

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): Trade union rights at GCHQ have been a major cause celebre which has rattled down the 10 years since the withdrawal of trade union recognition. The issue has dominated debates on the Bill in both Chambers of the Palace of Westminster and new clause 1 shows the Opposition's strength of feeling here as well as in another place.

I understand the grievance that informs the argument. Clearly if any one of us had joined a trade union in the knowledge that membership was acceptable, it would seem to be part of an acquired right, we would think nothing of it and would therefore feel aggrieved if the right were withdrawn. I understand and respect that feeling of grievance, but I must refer to the basic principle.

The House understands that I have also run up against the Government, but they are accountable to an electorate and their perception of the defence of the nation gives them the right to make arrangements for those whom they employ. I am mindful of that right because when I read the Committee *Hansard* reports I could not see a distinction as regards national security. Hon. Members across the Chamber rightly accept that GCHQ is an integral part of our national defence or early warning system. It has been argued that it is crucial and that the information that it delivers is important to the nation. We say the same of our armed forces and accept that it is intolerable that they should strike, even for one day, and that it might hinder our capability—not last time, but it might next time. Governments must look forward as well as refer back.

Dr. John Cunningham: I have been listening to the hon. Gentleman, but I do not understand his argument. He says that Governments are entitled to take such decisions. The same Government have a Joint Intelligence Committee, which handles the most precious secrets of the nation. Its members are members of a trade union. I guess that they belong to the First Division Association, which is affiliated to the Trades Union Congress. Their membership conflicts with the hon. Gentleman's argument.

Mr. Shepherd: That is why I approached the subject fairly diffidently. Until 1984, the same judgment applied to GCHQ. I understand the matter of principle that the Opposition have identified, which dominated the thrust of the attack on the Bill—attack is probably the wrong word. However, when the Government identify what they believe to be the essential interest for defence, although the right hon. Gentleman and I might disagree with the particular, the Government have a right to act. They must justify their actions to the Chamber and to the country.

I must contradict the new clause. I recognise that, where national security or organisations such as the Army are concerned—as the right hon. Gentleman said, there is a seeming contradiction—and the Government cites that, for example, GCHQ should not have the benefit of trade unions, but should work through staff organisations, that is a right of Government.

The Opposition are right to challenge the decision if they feel strongly about it. They have made it clear that if they form a Government they will restore the right. That is a respectable argument. I am saying that both arguments are respectable. However, the judgment falls to the Government and I will back them on it because I think that it is acceptable. It is the Government's perception that, although 10,000 hours lost in one day is not significant, they cannot be in that position again and they have made arrangements to that effect.

Mr. Winnick: If we do not carry the hon. Gentleman with us on the issue of civil liberties, we can reasonably assume that no other Conservative Member will vote with us in the Lobby. Does the hon. Gentleman accept, however, that the Government should give strong and compelling reasons for taking away a basic right?

All those employees were highly praised for their role in the Falklands campaign in 1982 and, furthermore, no one has argued that their capabilities were not at full strength during the cold war when they were trade union members. For the hon. Gentleman to prove his case he would have to say that the Government argued that GCHQ's capabilities had been undermined, but no such argument has been put forward.

Mr. Shepherd: I guess that I implicitly accepted that point. The resurrection of details of GCHQ's history obviously informs our views on the subject. I accept that the Opposition take an entirely different standpoint. I reiterate that the Opposition Front-Bench team have stated that, when they have the opportunity of being in government, they will restore the right.

I am merely arguing that, as a matter of principle, each Government responsible for national security must make decisions and judgments about it. The strike might not have had consequences for national security at the time, but we must all look forward and decide how we would meet such a contingency in the future. The trade union's offer of a no-strike bargain was a subsequent undertaking.

The Government made a judgment in 1984 and it is no secret that I was not happy with it. I may have taken a different judgment, but that is not the point. The nation commissions the Government to look after our national security and accepts that GCHQ is an integral part of it. The Government can therefore argue, and feel strongly

justified in doing so, that it is part of the country's defence forces and as such should be inhibited from forming unions and striking.

Mr. Rogers: I cannot follow the hon. Gentleman's argument. Is he saying that the Government have the right to override the international conventions and treaties that they have subscribed to? If he is saying that they can do so willy-nilly, it is a pretty awful state of affairs. The Government have subscribed to conventions laid down by the International Labour Organisation, which is an arm of the United Nations. We cannot subscribe to an international treaty that acknowledges that people have a right to join an organisation of their choosing and then decide to override it. If that is the case, why do not the Government withdraw from those international agreements? After all, the ILO was set up to safeguard workers' rights. It was originally thought that it would be necessary only in third-world countries, but that is just about the level that we are getting to in this country under this Government.

Mr. Shepherd: I am trying to illustrate the distinction of principle. I notice that the Opposition do not suggest for one moment that when they come into office they will allow the armed forces to have the right to join a trade union.

Mr. Kilfoyle: The hon. Gentleman is telling the House that he is trying to make a distinction of principle. May I ask him the question that I asked the right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery)? Is he saying that he regards members of GCHQ as members of the military establishment and in a separate category in terms of national security and membership of trade unions? How does he square that view with the fact that employees of a private firm who might be maintaining aircraft engines —I gave the example of bomber command—might be union members? Is it not contradictory to say, as the right hon. Member said, that they can belong to a union when employees at GCHQ cannot because their membership somehow affects our national security? Does not the hon. Gentleman see the inconsistency in his argument?

Mr. Shepherd: Yes, but life is full of inconsistencies. That is not meant to be a glib response. The Government directly employ a huge establishment at GCHQ who are dedicated, as hon. Members on both sides of the House accept, to the defence of our nation. I attended the Standing Committee and carefully read the reports. I know that that is accepted and common ground.

I am merely saying that there is a distinction of principle and that the Government adopted a reasonable position. I am not saying that it is unreasonable for the Labour party, which was founded by the trade union movement, to stand staunchly by the right of those 13 GCHQ employees. That is perfectly honourable. I understand why a future Government might take an alternative or a contrary view. That is the distinction that I am acknowledging. I do not think that it is the major issue in the Intelligence Services Bill; that is the essence of my remarks.

Mr. Rogers: Will the hon. Gentleman then follow the logic of his argument and ask the Government to ban trade unions in atomic weapons establishments, for instance? Due to the contractorisation of atomic weapons establishments to private companies, civil servants are involved only in monitoring certain situations and the general work force are now not Government servants. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that the Government could, in the interests of national security, ban trade unions in that industry?

5 pm

Mr. Shepherd: We are going round in a circle. I am saying that the Government of the day—whether Labour or Conservative—have a right to determine which matters affect directly the national security of the nation and they stand accountable to the electorate and to the House. That Governments may have different views about different organisations at different times is wholly appropriate and consistent with the argument that I am mounting.

However, I find it slightly curious that this is the dominating debate about the Intelligence Services Bill which is linked to the security services legislation. I accept that it is a major cause celebre, but it is not the essence of the debate about the Bill.

Mr. Kilfoyle: Is not the whole purpose of the intelligence service to protect the very liberties which are being undermined in the case of those people who, under an international convention, have an established right to belong to a trade union at Government communications headquarters? What is the point of having an intelligence service if those liberties are not protected in this of all places?

Mr. Shepherd: That is a powerful argument and I treat it with respect. That is why I think that the remit is very important. That is why I think that national security, in definition, is very important and why I think that the Committee of parliamentarians and its remit is important. That is why I think that the tribunal is important. I have lots of views about the Bill, but I do not see this as the crucial issue in it.

I understand the passion that is expressed about the matter. I think that it is legitimate and fair. But I also think that the counter view is legitimate and fair. If Opposition Members wish, they may implement recognition of trade unions at GCHQ when they come to government. I think that I have made my point in my small contribution to the debate.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I am one of those who believe that we must always maintain the security of our nation. We debated the main security services—the intelligence service, Government communications headquarters and the military—during the Second Reading of the Bill. We have to make sure that they work well.

When I was 15 years old I joined the shipyard at Devonport and I have been a member of a trade union ever since. Frankly, I cannot understand what Conservative Members are going on about. I cannot see any conflict whatsoever regarding national security and membership of trade unions. I say to the hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) that I do not think that we can bridge the gap between us on this issue.

The Government must take action to resolve the problem with the rights of staff at GCHQ. They should be able to become members of a union of their choice which can be regarded as being an independent union. They are the key points of convention 87: the ability to choose which union to join and the recognition of a union as being independent.

[Mr. Stuart Randall]

The Government could be censured by the International Labour Organisation. The ILO is scheduled to meet again in the autumn and I would be ashamed if it were to censure this country. The censure could take the form of awarding a "special paragraph". That is very serious as it is the ILO's highest form of censure. In practice, it would mean that Britain would be seen to be in breach of an ILO convention—in this case, convention 87, which deals with the rights of individuals to be members of trade unions of their choice. The ILO is an international organisation of great repute and, in my view, it would be very damaging to Britain's interests if we were seen to disregard or belittle in any way the rulings or advocacy of that organisation.

The awarding of a special paragraph is used very rarely by the ILO. Therefore, when it is used we can assume that the ILO views the breaching of the convention very seriously. In the past, special paragraphs have been issued over such violations as slavery in the Sudan, forced labour in Brazil and the murder of trade unionists in El Salvador. If the ILO censures us in that way, Britain will be seen as ignoring human rights. Additionally, it will be seen as flouting an important international convention to which it is a signatory.

What therefore is the current position? A censure in the form of the special paragraph was proposed by the ILO in 1992, but it was withdrawn when the Government declared their intention to reach a solution that was satisfactory to all parties. They said that they hoped for

"a substantive, frank and constructive dialogue carried out in good faith."

The Government agreed to undertake such dialogue following the statement in 1992 by an important ILO committee. It said three things: first, the committee was unanimous about the need for a renewal of dialogue between the Government and trade unions; secondly, it deplored the fact that it was unable to note any tangible progress on the question of the breach of convention 87, or even a resumption of discussions; and, thirdly, it urged the Government to resume in the very near future

"constructive discussions calculated to lead, through genuine dialogue, to a compromise acceptable to both sides."

The Government have agreed to create such a compromise. But what are they doing now? In 1992 they said that they would take action to resolve the problem—they are committed to doing that. In January, in a parliamentary answer, the Prime Minister said that the overriding concern was the maintenance of the continuing operation of GCHQ —we all agree with that—in order to protect national security.

However, there is no evidence that the industrial action taken between 1979 and 1981 damaged national security. We have already heard the quotes from Sir John Nott, so I will not repeat them. But, essentially, no operational activity was affected in any area during the dispute. I estimate that about 15 people per year did not work during the period. If one calculates that there are 300 working days a year, only a tiny number of people were involved in industrial action.

In this context, the Prime Minister said that the Government Communications Staff Federation—the registered union for GCHQ staff—should become affiliated with the Council of Civil Service Unions. The right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) also referred to that suggestion in his speech. It was rejected by the trade unions for one key reason—it was absolutely irrelevant because, even if it were regarded as a solution, convention 87 would still be violated. There was no way in which the trade unions could accept that offer. The Prime Minister went on to say that there were no plans at that time to hold further meetings.

What the Government are doing—seemingly via the office of the Lord Chancellor—is creating all sorts of legal arguments. They are wriggling by saying that convention 87 cannot be applied directly to the GCHQ case and that it is necessary to consider the words of convention 152. It is clear that they are raking in all sorts of legal arguments. I do not believe that such arguing and that kind of court stuff will enhance the esteem of Britain.

I shall ask the Minister three questions. First, do the Government fully support the principles laid down in convention 87? It is rumoured that the Government might even withdraw from the ILO. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman can confirm whether that is true. Does he agree that people should be free to choose to which union they want to belong and that those unions can be independent? I should like to know the Government's thinking on that.

Secondly, will the Minister tell the House exactly under what circumstances the Government could allow staff at GCHQ to join independent unions of their choice? I am sure that the House will wait to hear the Minister's replies because we need some help from the Government to see if we can break the logjam.

Thirdly, I hope that the Minister will admit that progress is slow. Is it the Government's intention to put forward some proposals to form the basis for constructive dialogue?

I should like the answers to those three simple little questions, because I am one of those people who genuinely believes that the argument about trade union membership was a political mistake created a number of years ago. It has nothing to do with national security and it is completely fallacious to rake in such an argument. What we are talking about has nothing to do with the security services; we are talking about basic individual rights. For that reason I support the new clause.

I see no conflict between trade union membership and national security. I have seen no evidence and heard nothing today to suggest that being a member of a trade union affects national security. That is a load of old rubbish. The mistake was made by Lord Howe, who was probably being pushed at the time by a certain lady. The Government now cannot dig themselves out of the great hole into which they have got themselves.

One thing is clear: the ILO will consider the matter again this autumn and it will be up for consideration at next year's conference. We therefore have a year in which to sort the whole thing out. I ask the Government to get stuck in, have some discussions and come up with a sensible solution to the problem. We can then put it to bed once and for all.

Will the Minister please answer my three questions?

Mr. French: There is a striking contrast between the posture adopted by the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr Cunningham), who opened the debate—it was reinforced by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall)—and the views held by the current employees at GCHQ. Many of them are my constituents;

they live in Gloucester and work at GCHQ in Cheltenham. Very few of those employees have any complaints about the prevailing situation at GCHQ.

The attitude of the Labour party, and, to an extent, that of the Liberal party, is yet another example of an attempt to whip up this issue into a major problem, some years after it has ceased to be a major problem locally. That was well illustrated by the recent demonstration on the 10th anniversary of the trade union ban. Several Opposition Members have referred to that demonstration and any of them who witnessed it would have noticed two things. First, the Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), was at its head and spoke to the assembled multitude. Secondly, if those witnesses had looked more carefully, however, they would have noted that the number of local people and, particularly, the number of local employees of GCHQ who attended the demonstration was very small.

5.15 pm

The hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) will no doubt repeat the point that he made in Committee that those employees were not at the demonstration because, as they are not permitted to be members of a trade union, they should not have been there. I cannot see that membership of a trade union would or should have prevented them from expressing their views by taking part in that demonstration. I must emphasise, however, that the majority of people who attended that demonstration were drafted in from other parts of the country. Some were drafted in at the behest of certain members of the Labour party, who wished to give the impression and convey a national message that GCHQ is still a matter of great concern locally and, therefore, nationally. That was a false message, because it did not represent local views accurately.

Mr. Rogers: May I suggest to the hon. Gentleman that, if he quotes what I said in Committee, he should make use of the relevant column in the *Official Report*? I do not recall saying what he claimed I said in Committee.

Mr. French: I regret that I do not have the precise column reference to hand, but if I can find it before the end of the debate, I will quote it to the hon. Gentleman.

The right hon. Member for Copeland should understand that approximately half of the current employees at GCHQ joined it some time after the ban had come into effect. They joined in the full knowledge of the conditions of service to which they had to agree. Those people are not complaining, because they joined in the full knowledge that they would be unable to join a trade union. That ban has not prevented them from taking up their employment. That fact, too, reveals that there is a yawning gap between views held locally and those expressed by the Opposition today and in Committee. The Opposion are trying to foist their views on the House and the nation.

Mr. Rogers: For the purpose of the exercise, I accept the argument that the hon. Gentleman has put forward—the wishes of the employees at GCHQ should be paramount. In that case, why would he object to a ballot being held there on whether employees wanted to join a trade union? That could be held according to the law that the Government have prescribed. Why not allow the workers at GCHQ the right to a ballot under the rules and regulations drawn up by the Government?

Mr. French: As the hon. Gentleman knows, those employees are eligible to join the staff federation, which I shall discuss later. I am arguing that the views of those people, as represented by the Labour party, purporting to express views held locally, are being grossly and seriously distorted. From local knowledge and from constant contact with employees at GCHQ in a local context, I am confident that my argument is sound.

Several Opposition Members have ridiculed Conservative Members for, they claim, holding the view that trade unions at GCHQ would constitute a threat to security. It very much depends on what one understands by a threat to security. It is not a threat to security in the sense that Conservative Members are speaking about something equivalent to reds under the bed. Anyone who understands the procedures in GCHQ will realise that there is a possibility of a threat to national security.

Mr. Kilfoyle *rose—*

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon) *rose—*

Mr. French: Before I am interrupted, perhaps I could be allowed to explain why and how I can substantiate that remark. Then I will give way to the hon. Gentleman—to both hon. Gentlemen, if necessary.

We have heard comments by the Opposition that there never has been any interruption to the data collection. The data collection is a vital part of what GCHQ does, although it performs many other services. The continuity and non-interruption of that data collection is vital. If one is involved, as people are in GCHQ, in gathering a continuous collection of information, which, having been gathered, is subject to code-breaking and interpretation, it becomes clear that an interruption of any type in that data collection can completely destroy the capacity to interpret the rest of the information that is collected.

If I may give a simple illustration, if data has been collected continuously for seven days but there is then an interruption for as much as seven minutes, that can render the interpretation of the seven days' data difficult, if not impossible or invalid.

Mr. Kilfoyle: If it is so important to maintain the continuity of the collection and interpretation of data, why was one of the people who were dismissed so summarily as a result of the attitude of the Government towards trade unions at GCHQ the only Chinese technical expert available to GCHQ, and why, subsequently, was the body of expertise that had been built up around that individual allowed to be dissipated? The department was closed. If it was so important to maintain that data, why did the Government act so vindictively?

Mr. French: I am speaking about the continuity of collection of data. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has fully understood that. I am fairly sure that the task of the gentleman to whom he refers was interpreting data, not collecting it. That is all the difference in the world. Even the best interpreter of data cannot interpret correctly if the collection is not complete.

Mr. McWilliam: May I tell the hon. Gentleman, as a sponsored member of the National Communications Union, and someone who has worked on national security and defence communications over the years and has never broken the Official Secrets Act 1911, first, that I do not

[Mr. McWilliam]

know where he gets the basis for the statements that he has just made. Secondly, there has been no break in the continuity of data at GCHQ during the strike.

Thirdly, people such as me who have worked in national security and defence communications for all these years who are active trade unionists find the attitude of the Government of the previous right hon. Member for Finchley, now Baroness Thatcher, and others towards trade unionists deeply and personally objectionable. The only traitors that we have had, and the ones that have been prosecuted, are not trade unionists, active trade unionists, socialists or members of the Labour party. They have been members of the classes represented by the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends.

Mr. French: I am not sure that the concluding remarks by the hon. Gentleman have a correct place in the debate.

Several Opposition Members—the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) has added to that—have argued that there has been no breakdown in the collection of data. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) pointed out earlier that the fact that no harm had been done as a result of any—

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde) *rose—*

Mr. French: May I just finish my argument?

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery pointed out to us that no harm had allegedly been done as a result of any interruption, and a reference was made to the remarks allegedly made by the then Defence Secretary, Sir John Nott, quoted recently in debate. The argument that Sir John Nott made at the time was not that there had been no damage done as a result. It was made clear in Committee and made clear by the then Prime Minister, commenting on Sir John Nott's remarks, that he

"was referring only to military operations"

and

"GCHQ did not come under his then Department and does not now."—[*Official Report*, 31 January 1984; Vol. 53, c. 136.]

Therefore, the comments of Sir John Nott do not support the argument that no damage was done at the time.

Mr. Graham *rose—*

Mr. Rogers *rose—*

Mr. French: No; I would like to proceed. I have given way a great deal.

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Gentleman said that he would give way.

Mr. French: Yes, but I am coming now to another point that the hon. Gentleman— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) has intervened a great many times and, if the hon. Member for Gloucester (Mr. French) is not giving way, he must respect that.

Mr. French: I have given way to a large number of Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Rhondda and I want to answer an argument that he made earlier before giving way to yet a further intervention from him.

The hon. Member for Rhondda and other Opposition Members referred to the fact that, if 10,000 days were lost and there are 6,500 employees, that amounts to only 1½ days per employee. They seem to pray in aid, as an argument, that that is not serious and could not have done very much damage. Continuing my argument about the interruption of data, the loss of 1½ days by one employee is a lot. It is not a little, as the Opposition Members seemed to argue.

Mr. Rogers: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. French: No.

It is a large, serious interruption, and to interpret it as 1½ days instead of the 10,000 days that it was gives a misleading picture.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice (Lewisham, East): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way on the point about days. I wonder whether he would tell the House whether 1½ days lost as a result of strike action is better or worse than 1½ weeks lost as a result of illness.

Mr. French: The fundamental difference is that proper cover can be given when 1½ weeks are lost as a result of illness, to ensure the continuation of the collection of data, for the simple reason that a large proportion of the work force is not ill simultaneously. Those 10,000 lost days represented a significant number of employees—not all, but a significant number—not working at the same time. That is what makes it potentially very damaging.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery is not present, but no doubt he is ably represented by the hon. Lady. He said that it must be accepted that all lawful trade disputes militated against someone's interests. This is why the comparison made earlier between GCHQ employees and members of the military is so important. If we indeed accept the hon. and learned Gentleman's proposition—as his party seems to—the "someone" referred to is, in this instance, the nation's security. That places his argument on a different level from some of the other arguments that may be advanced in an understandable attempt to justify legitimate trade union action.

5.30 pm

I said earlier that I wished to deal with the question of the staff federation, whose role has been significantly underestimated in the debate so far. It has been in existence for nearly 10 years, having been established in 1985; in 1988, it was granted sole recognition in regard to the representation of staff. All the local evidence suggests that it represents their interests very satisfactorily.

Mr. Winnick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. French: No; I want to continue with what I am saying.

The federation is, after all, completely democratic. Its officers and members of the general executive council are elected by secret ballot, and it is a representative organisation. Since 1985 it has been listed as a trade union, with the certification officer, under the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1974. It operates independently, and is elected independently; it fulfils the task that it was set up to fulfil—the representation of employees. The only requirement involved is that it must not be affiliated to a political organisation, and there is nothing so unreasonable

about that stipulation. Those who do not agree with it must present an argument against it, and there is no sound argument to that effect.

Mr. Winnick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. French: No. I am now making my final point, and I have already given way a great deal.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Hon. Members seem to be forgetting some of the courtesies of the House. When it is clear that an hon. Member is not going to give way, there is no point in other hon. Members' continually shouting "Will the hon. Gentleman give way?" across the Chamber. On this occasion, the hon. Member for Gloucester (Mr. French) is clearly not going to give way.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If an hon. Member is making statements that need to be clarified, is it not beneficial for him to give way so that another hon. Member can correct them if necessary?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is nothing to do with the Chair. The winding-up speeches provide a facility for hon. Members who wish to challenge any points made by others.

Mr. French: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Let me place on record that I have already given way five or six times, as *Hansard* will show. I consider that perfectly reasonable, and I do not think that I should be forced to give way further by misconduct on the part of Opposition Members.

My final point relates to comments made by the right hon. Member for Copeland and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall). Both were extremely dismissive about the Prime Minister's efforts. It is obvious from all the available information that the Prime Minister has made strenuous attempts to reach an accommodation with those who want full trade union representation, and that he has done so for a long time.

First, Sir Robin Butler was authorised to hold discussions to try to find a way out of the problem. A good many discussions were held with national unions in the attempt to find a formula; they began in 1992, and continued in 1993. Meetings were held with the general secretaries of a number of national unions, and various possibilities were considered. The main issue remained the same, however: the national unions' desire for the right to recruit at GCHQ could not be reconciled with the Prime Minister's understandable view that the overriding desire should be for the continuity of data collection. I very much hope that Opposition Members will come to appreciate —given all the available facts—that that is essential to national security.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): I have a good deal in common with the views of the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd). My wartime experience of contacts with the intelligence services persuaded me that there were wide variations in both the scope and the status of the different sectors, but, like nearly every other hon. Member who is present, I am constrained in what I can say publicly.

In present-day Northern Ireland, an increasing number of the functions of the armed forces and the police are being civilianised or privatised. The right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) mentioned civilians employed in sensitive posts in Whitehall. Very few such civilians, either in Whitehall or on our island, have betrayed their trust as servants of the Crown; I believe that the vast majority of trade unionists are loyal to the Crown, and to their country.

Indeed, that is not in dispute. This is not a question of loyalty; it is not really a question of security in the broader sense, that people cannot be trusted. The problem for my party is the fact that the continuity and smooth working of the establishment at GCHQ are essential.

It has been said that hours lost through sickness vastly outnumbered those lost through industrial action; but, as has also been said, that is not the point. Even a flu epidemic would not immobilise GCHQ at one fell swoop. Admittedly there might be some reduction in efficiency, a backlog in decoding and a delay in the provision of transcriptions; but there would not be a complete closedown.

The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) —who sometimes agrees with me—assured us that the 10,000 staff days lost during the strike between 1979 and 1981 did not fatally damage operations: he provided written evidence whose validity I accept. The potential for damage remains, however. Presumably a complete closure was avoided in 1981 by the existence of—I hesitate to use the term—strike breakers: not every member of staff joined in. We must ask, however, whether we can be certain that such disunity within the unions will not be repeated.

I accept the Opposition's assurances that industrial action is a thing of the distant past; I think that they honestly believe that. None the less, I have a niggling reservation. Whatever the cause of the 1981 stoppage—we have not been greatly enlightened about that cause today; there is some mystery about it—some such cause could surface again, with the best will in the world. Next time there could be a complete stoppage. I accept what the hon. Member for Gloucester (Mr. French) said, and we all know that an effective stoppage, for even a few hours, could do serious damage which it would be impossible to retrieve.

Mr. Rogers: The right hon. Gentleman makes an important point, and it is the reason that I was trying to intervene on the hon. Member for Gloucester (Mr. French).

I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will accept that the official Opposition are also concerned about the continuity of collection of sensitive material. The collection of material is carried out electronically; it is not necessary for someone to be present for material to be collected. At the weekend, for example, the number of staff present is very much diminished. Only 10 per cent. of the work force are involved in data collection, so the idea that the collection of material ceases if someone is away is entirely false.

Mr. Molyneaux: I hope that, in view of the rumoured cuts, the hon. Gentleman is not accidentally going to incite the Treasury to tell us that a much smaller work force would be acceptable at GCHQ. However, I accept some of what he said. If we need all those employees at GCHQ, it disproves his idea that tape recorders can run of their own accord—because of my limited experience of modern technology, I prefer the old pencil stub.

It has been suggested that new clause 1 could lead to a stoppage in the maintenance of aircraft engines by private

[Mr. Molyneaux]

workmen or a stoppage in a Whitehall Department, even at the Ministry of Defence. I accept that it could mean that an aircraft's take-off was delayed for 48 hours, that a payment order from the Paymaster General might be delayed, or that a cheque might not be issued and tenders not collected by the appropriate date, but the continuity that usually applies in those instances is very different from that at GCHQ where it is absolutely essential. Disruption at GCHQ would cause a great blank in the intelligence picture, which could never be filled from any other source.

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): I appreciate the fact that the right hon. Gentleman is drawing a distinction between the production of important engines and the work of GCHQ. Is that not precisely why the employee representatives involved offered a no-strike, no-disruption, agreement at GCHQ if their independent union were to be properly recognised again?

Mr. Molyneaux: I am grateful for the civilised way in which the hon. Gentleman asked his question. I should be greatly reassured if I knew what caused the earlier strike, and what guarantee there was that such a strike would not occur again.

Mr. McWilliam: The earlier strike was caused by management's insistence on imposing unacceptable working hours and conditions on employees of GCHQ. The union said that it was not prepared to accept them, so the management imposed them. That was the cause of the strike, so it seems perverse to blame the trade unions.

Mr. Molyneaux: I was careful not to blame the unions, because I have a great deal of respect for them. I expect that my party comprises a greater proportion of trade unionists than any other party represented in the House, so I do not discount the unions' attitude.

It would have been a great help if we had heard the hon. Gentleman's explanation earlier, but it does not entirely remove my worry. I want to be certain that GCHQ will not be put in jeopardy, and that the collection of information will not be interrupted, even for a matter of hours, because of some mysterious cause or even bloody-mindedness on the part of either side in a dispute. It is for that reason, not because I believe that trade unions are disloyal—I hope that I have made that clear—that I must with some reluctance oppose new clause 1.

5.45 pm

Mr. Allason: GCHQ understandably dominated the Bill's Second Reading and the Committee stage. New clause 1 goes to the heart of the issue of trade union recognition at GCHQ and, of course, of convention 87 of the International Labour Organisation. However, there are two reasons why the new clause should be opposed.

First, GCHQ is a special case. One must go back not just to its origins as the Government code and cipher school during the second world war but to room 39 of the naval intelligence division during the first world war, when the division achieved disproportionate success in the prosecution of war. I remind the House that, in 1917, it was as a direct result of the decryption of enciphered traffic by room 39 that the Zimmermann telegram brought the United States into the war. Room 39 then had a considerable impact on the battle of Dogger Bank and, of course, on the battle of Jutland.

Thereafter, there was enormous sensitivity about the interception of communications. The official secrets legislation of 1919 spells it out in black and white that the Government were authorised to intercept cables, telephone calls and other communications, so it was something of a surprise that Mr. Chapman Pincher should have made such a fuss about the D-notice affair with Lord Wilson, who was then Prime Minister.

The Government were perfectly entitled to intercept communications, but there was a great deal of sensitivity about the issue. Of course, the moment that someone becomes aware that his communications are being intercepted, he becomes a great deal more discreet.

The 1924 White Paper was arguably one of the gravest breaches of security that this country has ever faced—a Prime Minister decided to compromise national security by disclosing details of secret communications that had been passing between the Soviet embassy in London and Moscow. They revealed that the trade agreement that had been made was going to be ignored by the Soviet authorities. There was a short-term advantage for the Government in that, but, in the long term, it had the effect of preventing the operation of GCCS. That is why I mention it now.

Much has been said to the effect that new clause 1 will not interfere with the continuity of operations at GCHQ. That is not the case. It is worth remembering that, in 1938, during the Munich crisis, the Prime Minister's first opportunity to know whether he had achieved any success with Adolf Hitler was when the Deutschland left the Spanish port of Vigo. GCCS was monitoring radio traffic from the Deutschland, a very large German naval vessel.

The question was whether it was going to turn west and south and continue its intended cruise to South America with a crew of trainees, in which case Mr. Chamberlain could be assured that he had achieved what he wanted from Munich and there was not to be immediate war; or whether the Deutschland turned north and east from Vigo, in which case it would be assumed that the Deutschland, returning to port, was crewed by a crack crew of naval seamen, which meant that war was fairly imminent.

That is the kind of crucial undertaking never disclosed at the time, or in any history book, but it is a communication between the cryptographers and analysts, and the individuals who advise the Prime Minister and the Cabinet of such sensitive activities. Nobody would underestimate the achievement of GCCS, and thereafter GCHQ, during the second world war at Bletchley park, where a disproportionate contribution was made to the prosecution of the war by about 12,000 people who worked at that establishment.

However, the difficulty that faces us today, which also faced the GCHQ employees in 1984, is the fact that they are in a sense victims of their own success.

One of the questions raised earlier in the debate was why, when the industrial action took place between 1979 and 1981, the Government took no action until 1984. People ask whether that is evidence of some kind of paranoia, or at least unreasonable behaviour, on the part of the Government and the Prime Minister of the day. However, at no time in the post-war period was GCHQ ever described as or admitted to be a cryptographic organisation. It was never mentioned as an organisation

devoted to the interception and decryption, or indeed to the security, of communications. It was listed simply as the communications department of the Foreign Office.

The change between 1981 and 1984 was brought about by the criminal prosecution of Geoffrey Prime. For the first time in the history of GCHQ and GCCS, somebody had compromised security and provided secrets to the Soviets. As a result of his criminal conduct, Geoffrey Prime was the subject of an investigation and a prosecution at the Old Bailey. It was the disclosures then made publicly at the Old Bailey that enabled the Government to introduce the ban that would have brought, indeed did bring, GCHQ into common parlance.

Opposition Members may have a distant recollection of a Labour Administration, and it is worth remembering that it was a Labour Government who brought criminal proceedings against three people who disclosed the work of GCHQ, and a Labour Government who arranged for the deportation of the two people who wrote the notorious article in *Time Out*.

All that is neatly forgotten now, but at that time Labour Ministers were persuaded of the enormous importance of the work of GCHQ, and of keeping its activities secret. There was some controversy during that period but, to their undying credit, Labour Ministers were willing to go the whole hog.

The two people were expelled from this country. They exhausted their appeals procedures, but the Home Secretary of the day never lost his backbone. Thus, between 1979 and 1981, the Government were extremely reluctant to draw more attention to GCHQ. Regardless of whether the right decision was made, that was the explanation. The proposition that in 1984 the Prime Minister and the Government took arbitrary action is utter nonsense.

As for the International Labour Organisation, many Conservative Members who have studied its history will have considerable reservations about any judgment or criticism from that quarter. Certainly, until the mid-1950s, the ILO was regarded virtually as a branch of Soviet military intelligence. [HON. MEMBERS: "What?"] Yes. I shall not detain the House with a long list of the intelligence connections, but a clear link was established by a royal commission, through, for example, some work conducted in Canada in 1945. ILO members were identified as obvious Soviet intelligence personnel.

Mr. Winnick: I do not understand the logic of the hon. Gentleman's case. Even if it is possible—and indeed, in view of the nature of the Soviet Union, likely—that there were agents in the ILO, so what? No doubt the same was true of the United Nations. During the period of communism in Russia and elsewhere, should we have abolished the United Nations, or discontinued our membership of it, simply because the Soviet Union was doing its usual work of destabilisation, along the lines that the hon. Gentleman has suggested?

Mr. Allason: I am grateful for that intervention. I merely add that I recall the ILO being surprisingly quiet about the rights of workers who wanted to exercise their right to work at Grunwick. The political discrimination of the ILO has been remarkable when it looks for particular issues on which to go in to bat.

GCHQ is an important organisation, and its work must not be undermined by any interruption, albeit temporary. The issue of continuity has rather been missed in the debate hitherto, so I shall give the House a brief analysis. Continuity is not a matter of simple data collection, or of one individual hunched over a machine—or indeed, if the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) is to be believed, switching it on on a Friday and switching it off on a Monday when he comes in to work. There is the matter of collateral.

First, there is the collection of electronic data. That involves more than one person. Several people have to do it to ensure that it is accurate. If there is any corruption, the rest of the text may well be lost. That is the lesson that history teaches us.

Secondly, there must be continuous analysis of the data product. There should be no interruption of that. Finally, none of it is at all relevant unless it can be received in time by the appropriate departments and politicians. Anyone who doubts that should simply look at the history books. It is perfectly clear that, in December 1941, there was an enormous amount of cryptographic evidence of an impending Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, but none of the material was analysed in time. The White House did not receive it until nine days after the attack.

The statistical suggestion has been made that, as there are 6,500 or 7,000 employees at GCHQ, where only 10,000 days have been lost, one can extrapolate that that is the equivalent of everybody not working on one particular day during the year. Things do not work like that. The importance of intelligence is that it saves lives. It is not any kind of game.

If there had been good intelligence, we should not have had to fight the Falklands war or the Gulf war. Back beyond that, good intelligence would have meant that the Israelis would not have been taken by surprise during Yom Kippur in October 1973, and the allies would not have been taken by surprise in Korea, the Americans during the Tet offensive in 1968.

Good intelligence saves lives and prevents bloodshed. Surely that is the point. Any disruption of GCHQ's activities will inevitably compromise intelligence.

Dr. John Gilbert (Dudley, East): Good intelligence by itself does not save lives. Whether lives are saved depends on whether people have the will and the sense to act on that intelligence.

Mr. Allason: If the right hon. Gentleman has the honour to serve on the Intelligence and Security Committee, I hope that he will make a greater contribution than that. I fear that his remarks will be remembered by members of the Security Service, Secret Intelligence Service and GCHQ, who have saved tens of thousands of lives.

If the right hon. Gentleman is ever a member of the committee and gets to see classified information, I hope that he will return to the House and acknowledge the extraordinary work of MI5, MI6 and GCHQ in saving lives and preventing terrorist bombs being placed. Even within the right hon. Gentleman's short memory, he should be able to recall specific incidents. In one instance, a suspect was followed through the west end carrying bombs—he left bombs in wastepaper baskets, and lives were lost. In particular, one person was killed in a pub. Good intelligence saves lives, and is exceptionally important.

6 pm

Sir John Nott said that GCHQ had operated continuously, and that there had been no threat to its operational efficiency during his term of office. He was talking about the Falklands war, but I described a scenario in which good intentions prevent bloodshed.

The right hon. Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert) will recall that, when Lord Owen was Foreign Secretary, he presided over a considerable intelligence success. In 1977, there was clear evidence of an Argentine attack in the Falklands, and Britain deployed two hunter-killer submarines in the south Atlantic. The news of their deployment was deliberately leaked in Buenos Aires, and no Argentine attack took place.

Mr. Rogers: I remind the hon. Gentleman that the statement by Sir John Nott, then Secretary of State for Defence, that was much quoted on Second Reading, in Committee and today was made on 14 April 1981.

Mr. Allason: That may be the case, but Sir John did not have responsibility for GCHQ. That brings me neatly to the difference between the status of GCHQ personnel and that of their military counterparts.

A large number of GCHQ's activities are conducted by military personnel—Air Force analysts, two special signals regiments and naval interception operators. There is a difference between them. In legal terms or in terms of the trade union ban, there would have been no difference at all if it had been clear at the time that it would be impossible to disclose the nature of the work undertaken by GCHQ. That relates to my reference to GCHQ as the victim of its own success. Its work was of such priority that it was impossible to disclose its exact nature.

I do not impugn the loyalty of GCHQ staff members, and neither, I am sure, do my right hon. and hon. Friends. Personal disloyalty is not an issue here. All GCHQ staff were given the right of abandoning the opportunity to join an outside trade union, and many exercised it. They also exercised their right to join a staff association. Our earlier discussion related to just 14 people who, for one reason or another, decided against both options. That matter is for them. The Government certainly bent over backwards to provide them with alternative employment and to give them opportunities in a non-classified field outside GCHQ.

Of the many thousands of people who opted to accept financial compensation for the loss of their right to join an outside trade union, a tiny minority chose exclusion. It was entirely self-imposed.

GCHQ is an extraordinarily significant organisation. It makes an enormous contribution to this country's security, and it is on a par with the Security Service and Secret Intelligence Service. I have not heard Opposition Members demand that members of MI5 or SIS should have the right to join the First Division Association. Through their membership of the federation, GCHQ staff enjoy a far greater chance of obtaining better pay and conditions.

When I recently interviewed Yuri Modin, who was for many years a Soviet intelligence officer based in this country, he said, "MI5 officers run the very best union in the country." I asked him what he meant and he replied, "Whenever I wanted to be active, I arranged to have breakfast in exactly the same café in Holland Park avenue every day. It was entirely agreed with my MI5 counterparts that they would be there at 8 o'clock each morning to start work. When I was under surveillance in any pub, I gave an agreed sign when I was finishing my last drink, so that the MI5 watchers would have an opportunity to drink up in time."

That may be a slightly backhanded compliment from Yuri Modin, for whom I have been trying to obtain a visa for some time, but MI5 has a good union. The SIS and GCHQ have every reason to expect that their own staff associations will exercise a disproportionate amount of influence over the Government of the day. Accordingly, I urge the House to oppose new clause 1.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: I find myself in the same unfortunate position as on Second Reading of following the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) in his forage through history—not all of which was accurate.

I am a member of a trade union, as are all my right hon. and hon. Friends, and I am proud of it.

Mr. Rogers: We are members of several trade unions.

Mrs. Prentice: That is probably true.

Some Conservative Members have been trade union members, and may still be, and I am sure that they are equally proud of their membership. That is why this debate is so strange. Conservative Members seem to believe that, while it is perfectly acceptable for them to be trade union members, it is unacceptable for other groups—particularly for people who perform important, professional and patriotic work.

The Government's reason for banning trade unions at GCHQ had nothing to do with national security, but was a product of an innate hatred of trade unionism and collectivity by the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. Unfortunately, the present Prime Minister does not have the gumption to stand up and say that that was wrong.

What is it about the Government that makes them so afraid of people who like to work together in a collective and co-operative fashion? What makes the Government unable to realise that that can have a positive outcome on those people, collectively and individually?

Mention was made of the breach of ILO convention 87 that the Government made or are about to make, and it has been said that, by the end of this year, it is likely that the Government will have taken the United Kingdom into the same group as the Sudan, which was censured for slavery, and El Salvador, which was censured for the murder of trade unionists.

It is both disgusting and despicable that the Government are prepared to accept that censure. They should be thoroughly ashamed of themselves, but they are not. They care nothing for the people who work on their behalf to ensure our national security. Indeed, they do not care for anyone who works in the public service. It has been clear over the past 15 years that the Government, throughout all their strands, have no conception of what it is to work on behalf of others, which so many people believe to be the right thing to do.

Much has been made of the 10,000 days lost at GCHQ through industrial action. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said, that number is tiny when compared with the days lost as a result of sickness. The days-lost argument was dismissed by Sir John Nott, when he explained that operations had not been affected. Days lost stand as nothing when we remember those who have been sacked for being trade unionists at GCHQ.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) talked about one of the 14 men who were sacked at GCHQ. I shall mention Mike Grindley, who was the only Chinese technical linguist. What was the disruption to operational services when the Government sacked Mike Grindley? As I have said, his sacking meant that there was no technical Chinese linguist at GCHQ. What was the Government's response? They chose to close the department.

So much for the collection of data. So much for the need to have that data collected day in and day out for the consistency that Conservative Members have talked about this afternoon. The department was simply shut down. Suddenly, it was no longer important. It is clear that the Government's arguments are fallacious.

What was the basis on which trade unions at GCHQ were banned? It took the Government three years to come to that decision following the industrial action between 1979 and 1981. It is incomprehensible that there is a connection between the ban and the industrial action that took place three years earlier.

What was happening to national security between 1981 and 1984? Were the Government not concerned about national security during that period? Is that why it took them so long to get round to deciding that everything was the fault of trade unions, and that trade unions had to be banned?

I am not surprised that Conservative Members become excited when they find that people have principles and are prepared to stand by them. It was interesting that Conservative Members had little to say in Committee except on trade unions at GCHQ. When the issue arose, they suddenly became fired up. It seems that they do not understand that people might put principles before money. Perhaps that should not surprise us. That attitude or philosphy has driven the Government for the past 15 years. It is beyond their comprehension that people might believe in things that matter to them as individuals rather than in a material fashion.

My right hon. and hon. Friends and I want to put it on record that the employees of GCHQ are both loyal and patriotic. Unfortunately, Conservative Members are incapable of understanding that. The Government's actions in 1984 were shameful. The Government continue to cover themselves in shame while they ban workers at GCHQ from having the right to choose to be a member of a trade union.

When Conservative Members troop through the Lobby this evening to ensure that the ban remains in place, they will be covering themselves with the same shame that should attach to the Sudan, to Brazil, to El Salvador and to any other countries whose Governments do not allow their workers the freedom of expression that we ask for the workers at GCHQ.

Conservative Members may vote down the clause, but the time will come, sooner rather than later, when a Labour Government will return the right of trade unionism to the patriotic, professional and principled men at GCHQ. We shall be proud to do so.

6.15 pm

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): When I was 16 years of age, I served my apprenticeship in a firm at Govan called Matthew Wylies. When I was presented with my first union card, I was a proud young man. I am now 50 years of age, and I am proud that I still hold the same card. I come from a family of trade unionists. My late father was a trade unionist. He served in the Royal Navy for nine years. He was on HMS Medway when it sank.

I heard that the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) is getting together the bones of a new book. Bearing in mind what he had to say, it will not be a best seller among trade unionists.

I have had many conversations with friends and members of my family about their belief in trade unionism. We have never seen trade unionism as a threat to the nation's security. I am not kidded by the comments of some Conservative Members. I believe that the Government have inherited a vindictive policy from the former Prime Minister, whose hatred of trade unions and anything that smacked of trade unionism was well known. She used trade unionism at GCHQ as a lever.

It is appalling that the folk at GCHQ have had their democratic right to be members of a trade union withdrawn in the name of national security. The argument that the Government have advanced is spurious and undemocratic. The blanket ban is completely illogical.

Thousands of men and women laid down their lives to beat Hitler. Many folk have laid down their lives since for our country in the Falklands and other wars. I am sure that many of those people were members of trade unions. How can we deny those who work in GCHQ the membership of a trade union on the basis that that could jeopardise national security? The Government's approach is appalling. It is a travesty of justice.

Before I entered the Chamber, I explained to a couple of trade unionists what I was about to do and say. They are workers in a royal ordnance factory. I am sure that such people are involved in work that is sensitive in terms of our country's defence. I am sure also that they never exploited their positions by telling others what they are doing. We know that in a crisis they will ensure that ammunition is ready and available for soldiers, sailors and whoever needs it to defend our nation.

People say to me, "Tommy, to be a member of a trade union gives us a sense of pride. We are proud to be part of the great trade union movement of this country. It is an organisation that has always put the country to the fore." More important, it has put people to the fore. It continues to fight for the rights of the people, but not for folk who give away secrets, people who are prepared to see our country invaded and dominated by an enemy.

When I was a young man, I worked at Rolls-Royce. I was involved in the production of military equipment. None of the people with whom I worked was a traitor. Indeed, they would have been angry if they had even been thought of as traitors. Yet the Government have banned the folk at GCHQ from being members of a trade union.

Why are they being denied that right? I have not heard a Conservative Member state clearly why the folk at GCHQ are not entitled to be democratic members of a trade union. The Government's stance is unbelievable.

Mr. Jim Cunningham (Coventry, South-East): Does my hon. Friend find it strange that Conservative Members supported the rights of Solidarity in Poland yet denied the same rights to workers in this country? Does he agree that it is only right-wing Governments, if we bear in mind history, and especially events in Latin America, who attack trade unionists? That is because the positive role of trade

[Mr. Jim Cunningham]

unionists is the defence of democracy. Nevertheless, Conservative Members have had much to say about reds under the bed, for example.

Mr. Graham: My hon. Friend is right. In the past, the Government have used anything to support their arguments for what they feel is right. They support trade unions in Poland, but they do not support them here. Trade unions in Poland can go on strike, but those in Britain cannot. I find such logic distasteful, to say the least.

It would be great if we all had hindsight and could look back and say, "If we had known this, we would not have done that." It would be magic if we had a crystal ball and we could see what faces the world and Britain—we would perhaps see an important step forward in the restructuring of Britain—but while the Government maintain their view on civil rights, particularly the civil rights of those at GCHQ, we shall never have democracy and we shall never make Britain great. The Government do not trust our people. They do not trust the men and women who work at GCHQ to be good solid citizens who will not stoop to treachery. They tell us that they do not believe that those folk should be members of a trade union because it would put national security at risk. I could go on, but I do not wish to speak for too long.

No matter how often the Government try, they cannot justify the trade union ban at GCHQ. We used to hear the statement that trade union decisions for the Labour party conference were reached in a smoke-filled room. We all know that that was nonsense. Even if it did contain an element of truth, the Government's decision was reached over champagne glasses and big cigars by people who do not understand what trade unionism is about. They do not understand that trade unionists see themselves as a part of the country and want to take part in the building of the country.

Only with the engine of trade unionism and with the solid backing of workers with rights will Britain ever become a good place in which to stay. Only then will we see decent pensions and decent education for young people. Only if we give folk democratic rights will they have a sense of pride in their nation and work hard to create a good Britain in which to live. The Government should do the right thing and restore the democratic right of every citizen in this country to be a member of a trade union if they so desire.

Dr. Gilbert: I feel that I should start by apologising to the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason), who is not in his place. I clearly over-taxed his mental equipment when I intervened in his speech. I promise never to intervene on him again. I would have liked to have been able to say that to the hon. Gentleman's face, but as he was so discourteous as to leave the Chamber only a couple of moments after my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice) began her speech, I feel that I owe him no courtesy on this occasion.

I will not detain the House for long. I support virtually everything that has been said with such eloquence, knowledge and passion by Labour Members, except for one thing. I do not necessarily pray in aid any of the authorities that they have prayed in aid this evening. I do not give a toss what the International Labour Organisation says about the issue at Cheltenham and I am not panting to know what the European Court of Human Rights has to say about it. I do not need either of those organisations, however august they may be, to tell me that what was done was sleazy and vindictive, had nothing to do with defence considerations and sprang from the Government's mentality, which has left, among other things, this great city of London without any proper governance for many years.

The only other reason that I am on my feet is to make it clear that even those Labour Members who could be regarded as pretty hawkish on defence and security matters —I make no apology for that, never have done and never will do in this place—are enthusiastically at one in support of the new clause and will vote for it with great enthusiasm. We will not do so simply because we are Lobby fodder.

Mr. David Davis: I agree with the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on one thing—I, too, pay credit to the work of the staff at GCHQ. I hope that he will take it well that I also agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason), who said the same thing, as did a number of others.

There have been some well-informed speeches this evening, not least by my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mr. French), who has a direct constituency interest and who made some excellent points about the whole debate. I particularly associate myself with one of those points—the credit that he paid to the staff federation. I do not want to labour that point, just to reinforce it. Although he is not here, I appreciate the remarks of the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), who has more reason than most to have a special interest in the matter.

Mr. Winnick: I am grateful to the Minister for allowing me to intervene at such an early stage in his speech. Since the hon. Member for Gloucester (Mr. French) did not give way, will the Minister confirm that the staff union, which to us is just a company union, was refused recognition as a genuine, independent trade union by the certification officer? Its application was turned down and rightly so. On appeal, the employment appeals tribunal upheld the decision of the certification officer. As he made clear, that union, if it can be described as such, exists only because the director general allows it to continue as an organisation.

Mr. Davis: I shall answer the hon. Gentleman exactly. He was rather inexact in his question because he used a variety of words such as "genuine", as well as "independent". The one word that he was right about was "independent". About 80 trade unions are listed as not independent. Like the staff federation, many of them have been commended by the certification officer for being effective, which they are, but they are not certified as independent. They include the National Union of Mineworkers area unions. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has any reason to run those down.

Clearly, it is the first duty of the Government to safeguard the security of the nation. In the context of the new clause, it is the principal responsibility of Government to maintain the security and effectiveness of GCHQ. The Government set out their objective in 1984—to ensure the continuous undisrupted operation of GCHQ. The Government's action in 1984 has been effective in ensuring the continuous operation of GCHQ since then.

Disruption of GCHQ operations posed a substantive risk to the country's security. Industrial action was taken

with the express intention of causing disruption and it succeeded in doing so. The Government clearly had a duty to act.

The continued effective and efficient operation of GCHQ requires that there is no division or confusion of loyalties.

Mr. Graham: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Davis: I will give way in a moment. I want to make at least a little progress.

In practice, membership of external unions has led to a risk of divided loyalties, a point that I shall make in some detail later. That is not a theoretical matter—it has happened in the past. Labour's case today, and to some extent that of the Liberal Democrats, has rested on arguments that go something like, "The strikes did not do any material harm and if they did, that was not really intended anyway, it was just a spat with the management locally". All those arguments are fatuous.

The Opposition's position is that industrial action involving GCHQ in the period 1979 to 1981 did not harm national security. How can they be so sure? The point of GCHQ is to listen continuously for possible threats to the country or to its citizens. Any break in its vigil poses a potential threat. With modern techniques, vast amounts of data can be sent in a short space of time. A few seconds' gap is enough to miss a vital instruction to terrorists.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Were there any gaps?

Mr. Davis: Yes.

In these days of burst transmission, even a speech by the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) could be transmitted in a few seconds. We should bear in mind that one could be trying to intercept, for example, one-word instructions that may launch an operation, a terrorist action or something of that nature. The whole point about GCHQ is that it operates seven days a week, 24 hours a day, 60 minutes in the hour.

Mr. Carlile: Are we hearing a Minister say for the very first time that there were some gaps in communications —that they were not received? He should answer that directly, because if there were, this is the first time that the claim has been made in the 16 years since the dispute began.

6.30 pm

Mr. Davis: I shall come back to the point in a minute.

It is not possible to forecast when a state-sponsored terrorist organisation will communicate with its masters, or when other actions by an antagonistic state will occur. In pursuit of the maintenance of continuous operations, it is vital that staff at GCHQ do not face conflicts of loyalty that may lead to a loss of efficiency, or to a loss of coverage, or to any breakdown of GCHQ activities.

In 1979-81, 10,000 man days were lost as a result of union action, and they were lost in critical areas of work. The right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) made a rather fatuous point in this connection. He said that the 10,000 days lost were fewer than the number of days lost owing to sickness or holidays, but the latter, of course, were not targeted. GCHQ, like any properly run organisation, is designed to allow for absences for jury days, holidays and so on.

The industrial action was set against the background of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Iranian hostage crisis, Soviet troops on the border of Poland and rising state-sponsored terrorism in a number of countries. The Opposition must accept that there was a least some disruption. The unions themselves accepted as much.

Dr. John Cunningham: Does the hon. Gentleman agree with the statement by the former Secretary of State for Defence, Sir John Nott, that the effectiveness of GCHQ was never put in jeopardy?

Mr. Davis: I happen to have Sir John's exact words to hand, as reported in the *Official Report*:

"The selective action by non-industrial civil servants has hindered some defence activities, but neither training exercises nor essential operations have been interrupted."—[*Official Report*, 14 April 1981; Vol. 3, c. 136.]

Later, the then Prime Minister said that Sir John was referring only to military operations:

"GCHQ did not come under his then Department and does not now."—[*Official Report*, 31 January 1984; Vol. 53, c. 136.]

As I told the Committee, about 3,000 soldiers act on behalf of GCHQ gathering military data. The industrial action did not interfere with their duties because they could not go on strike in any case.

As I was saying, the Opposition must accept that there was some disruption because the unions themselves accepted that. At the Employment Select Committee meeting on 8 February 1984, at page 39 and section 77, it was reported that Mr. McCall of the Council of Civil Service Trade Unions had been asked:

"have you disrupted security in the past, by industrial action?"—

and that he had replied

"I think the straightforward answer to that is yes, we have."

The Opposition clearly feel that all this was not a risk to security. I should be interested to know what degree of disruption they believe is acceptable at GCHQ. The Government's view is: none.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Will the Minister now answer my straight question? Does he claim for the first time that there was any interruption to any message, or that any transmission was not recorded, as a result of this action? The Minister has made the implication; now that he has made it, the House is entitled to a straight answer.

Mr. Davis: I must tell the hon. and learned Gentleman again: there were some reductions in cover. Some material may therefore have been missed—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Opposition Members seem to think that unimportant, yet we are talking about a time of state-sponsored terrorism and of the Soviet Union being on the borders of Poland. Opposition Members clearly believe that some drop in cover was all right. Now we know what price to put on the Labour party's commitment to patriotism—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. It is getting to the point where I cannot hear the Minister. I, at least, wish to do so.

Mr. Davis: I have dispatched Labour's point about there having been no loss of cover and about the industrial action having caused no damage.

The other Labour argument is that the action was not intentional. What happened at GCHQ between 1979 and 1981 was a deliberate attempt on the part of the civil service unions to disrupt the operations of a vital national defence asset. I shall tell the story not in my words but in those of the trade unions involved. A national officer of the Civil and Public Services Association was quoted as saying, under the Labour Government in February 1979:

[Mr. Davis]

"The strike would completely paralyse Government communications, both internally and externally."

A local official was quoted a few days later as saying:

"Our action will seriously affect operations by at least 80 per cent., as our members are specialists."—[*Official Report*, 27 February 1984; Vol. 55, c. 27-28.]

That point seems to have been overlooked by many Opposition Members. This is not Government propaganda; it is what the trade unions themselves had to say.

I should like next to quote evidence given to the Select Committee on Employment:

"During the period of industrial action in 1981 there was one occasion on which an approach was made by a senior official of GCHQ . . . to . . . one of the national Civil Service trade unions . . . The reply . . . was 'Thank you. You are telling me where I am hurting Mrs. Thatcher the most.'"

There was no lessening of pressure as a result. The unions announced in the same month:

"There will be a range of selective and disruptive action which will affect Britain's secret communications surveillance network. There will be both national and international repercussions."

And on 3 April a senior union official said:

"This is the most crucial station we have hit so far. We are going to hit this Department 'as hard as we can.'"—[*Official Report*, 27 February 1984; Vol. 55, c. 27-28.]

So the areas of attack by industrial activity had clearly been carefully selected. The civil service unions' campaign report No.1 of 1981 clearly stated:

"The use of selective strike action by members in sensitive areas is a key part of our campaign. Our ultimate success depends on the extent to which . . . defence readiness is hampered."

That indeed was the intent. The unions may not have been in a position to know precisely how effective their action was, but it could hardly have been called accidental.

There is thus clear evidence of the effects of divisions of loyalty on the staff of GCHQ and of how those effects could be adverse for the operations of GCHQ. There is also clear evidence of the willingness of past union movement leaders to misuse their position to damage the country's security in pursuit of their own goals. I do not say that today's union leaders would necessarily behave in the same way, but that is really not the point. The new clause proposes a change in the law that would presumably apply for the foreseeable future. We cannot guarantee that there would not be similar industrial action at some point in that future.

The right hon. Member for Copeland made a number of points that I could not follow. He said, for instance, that there was a 1991 vote at the ILO. I can find no evidence of such a vote. The last one was in 1989, and we won that one. He also claimed that the ban was arbitrary. The decision of the European Commission on Human Rights stated, on page 31, in the second paragraph:

"The action taken was in no way arbitrary."

Several hon. Members talked about the International Labour Organisation. In his excellent contribution, my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) highlighted the complete humbug of Labour Members' speeches, as exemplified by the comments made by the right hon. Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert).

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) asked me to comment specifically on some matters. The Government do not accept that they are in breach of convention 87, which must be read in conjunction with convention 151, which explicitly provides separate arrangements for public servants employed on work of a highly sensitive nature. If GCHQ public servants are not employed on work of a sensitive nature I do not know who is. The Government have noted the comments of the ILO, have engaged in substantive discussions with the unions—those were taken on in good faith by both sides—and are still willing to consider any proposals that the unions bring forward.

In a written answer of 13 January 1994 the Prime Minister said:

"I met representatives of the civil service unions to discuss trade union membership at GCHQ at their request following a series of discussions they had held with officials. I explained that the Government's overriding objective remained to ensure the maintenance of continuous operations at GCHQ necessary for the protection of national security. In that context it was necessary also to ensure that the staff were not subject to potential conflicts of loyalty.

Against that background, however, I indicated that the Government were prepared to enable the Government Communications Staff Federation, the registered trade union for GCHQ staff, to affiliate to the Council of Civil Service Unions, subject to conditions to guarantee its continuing independence. . . . The national trade unions have indicated that they do not regard this as acceptable. There are no plans for further meetings, but the Government remain willing to discuss any further proposals that the unions may wish to put forward."—[*Official Report*, 13 January 1994; Vol. 235, c. 254-55.]

In answer to my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), I say that that is still the case.

I advise the House to oppose the new clause.

Mr. Rogers: Although we agreed to share the available time, unfortunately the Minister has taken up a great deal of it. As many hon. Members want to go to the memorial service for our late colleague, Ms Jo Richardson, which is due to start very soon, I shall confine my remarks to one or two points.

The hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) said that the question of GCHQ had dominated the Committee proceedings. As members of the Committee know, that is absolute nonsense. We dealt with other aspects. The hon. Member for Gloucester (Mr. French) talked about the rights of people currently working at GCHQ. I simply reiterate a point that was made to the hon. Gentleman: if the rights of GCHQ workers are so important, why do not the Government, under their own legislation, allow them a ballot on the question of their joining a trade union of their choice? The staff federation, regardless of what the Minister has said, is almost like a Stalinist trade union: the workers can have it so long as it is approved by the director. That is why the certification officer has not recognised the federation as a full and proper trade union. The Government's argument is absolutely spurious.

The whole debate is based on whether GCHQ is under threat if people take any action or are not there. Apart from the fact that the trade unions have given the Government a firm no-strike undertaking—a firm undertaking of exactly the same type, for example, as that which the police give—it should be remembered that data collection at GCHQ occupies less than 10 per cent. of the work force. The industrial action that took place in 1979 and between 1979 and 1981—in this connection I remind the House of remarks made by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux)—arose because the management had overturned a national pay agreement without any consultation whatever.

The number of days lost, in relative terms, was about 0.2 per cent. of the total work time during a period of two years. Over that period, up-front operations were at no time affected in any way. That is something that the Minister

can check quite easily. The majority of people at GCHQ work a 9 to 5.30 shift. There are other operations. Various electronic devices are used in data collection, and the idea that someone with a pencil sits listening to what our enemies are saying on the other side of the world is absolute nonsense—as much as is the Government's argument against trade unions at GCHQ.

I reiterate a point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham): one of the first acts of the Labour Government when they come to power in a couple of years' time will be to restore this basic human right to the workers at GCHQ.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 222, Noes 283.

Division No. 221] **[6.44 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Heppell, John
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Michael, Alun
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'ld'n E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jon Owen Jones and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushf)*

Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawksley, Warren
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'ter V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 1

The Secret Intelligence Service

Mr. Rogers: I beg to move amendment No. 3, in page 1, line 15, leave out 'with particular reference' and insert 'and where there is a threat'.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 4, in page 2, line 1, after '(b)', insert 'where it is substantially'.

No. 6, in page 2, line 3, after 'crime', insert

'which if not prevented would have a serious effect on law and order in the United Kingdom, on citizens of the United Kingdom or on employees of the Crown'.

No. 38, in clause 11, page 8, line 34, at end insert—

'(3) The Secretary of State shall by order define the meaning of "national security", "economic well-being" and "serious crime".

(4) No order shall be made under subsection (3) above unless a draft of the order has been laid before and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament.

(5) An order made under subsection (3) above shall cease to have effect at the end of five years beginning with the day on which it came into effect.'

Mr. Rogers: Clause 1 deals with the principles, circumstances and guidelines under which the security services may operate. The Opposition feel—I think we demonstrated this in Committee—that the clause is ambiguous and places few controls on the operations. The clause gives no indication of what actions are acceptable under its remit—of what laws can be broken and, except in the most general terms, for what purposes; it describes the shape but gives no one an idea of the colour of the matter.

The Lord Chancellor stated in the other place that nothing in the Bill put the security and intelligence services outside the law. He was right. But is not that simply because the clause is so all-embracing that it puts every action inside the law to start with? For example, is a shoot-to-kill policy acceptable in a civilised society? I am not saying that a shoot-to-kill policy exists; its existence or otherwise is not a matter for discussion this evening, but it could certainly exist within the remit of the Bill.

7 pm

It can be argued, as it was in Committee, that clauses 8 and 9 cover those problems in the sense that the warranting of the secret services and their ability to operate outside the law are tightly controlled by the Foreign Secretary. However, I am sure that when we come to discuss the warranting of certain actions, we shall see that the guidelines laid down for warranting give the secret intelligence services an open field in which to operate.

The problem with the Bill is that it puts the secret intelligence services outside the law. The warrants and authorisations in the Bill are a circumscription but they are not sufficient because the warrants are issued by the Secretary of State, who is not accountable to anyone—not even a court of law. Therefore, there is no legal proscription. Everything drops off at the commissioner and the tribunal. No one can have recourse to a court of law whether in the normal process of events or as a complainant. That is laid down in the Bill. That means that there is no legal proscription of the actions of the security and intelligence services. The Secretary of State is not a judge or a court of law, so there is no legal proscription. As we discussed in Committee, any task that one can think of —murder in an extreme situation, clubbing, imprisonment, torture or blackmail—could be put into action under a warrant. If the Secretary of State feels that he is prepared to operate that power without recourse to any secondary process of accountability—and when we come to discuss clause 10 we shall find that there is no real process of accountability—he will certainly have it under the Bill.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): The hon. Gentleman would be well advised to read the narrow terms of the warrant-making power in clause 5. He will see that it relates to

"entry on or interference with property or with wireless telegraphy".

It has none of the other effects to which he refers. He may be talking about clause 7 authorisations. If he is, we can discuss that.

Mr. Rogers: The Minister is right. I said that the warranting of certain actions came under another clause, which we would discuss later. The Minister ought to consider what is enclosed within clause 1. Rather than sitting there smugly thinking that he has made a rather smart debating point, he ought to realise that clause 1 lays out the structure, guidelines and controls under which the secret and intelligence services can operate.

I remind the Minister what the amendments say. We seek to close the open field that is given to the secret intelligence services. For example, amendment No. 3 refers to implementation of the powers where there is seen to be a threat to this country and to national security. Amendment No. 4 says that the powers should be implemented "where it is substantially" in the interests of the country—in other words, not for matters of a trivial nature. Amendment No. 6 refers to any crime

"which if not prevented would have a serious effect on law and order in the United Kingdom, on citizens of the United Kingdom or on employees of the Crown".

We are saying that the secret and intelligence services ought not to have the power in an open way, as they do under the Bill. The Opposition accept that we need to have a Security Service and that it needs to be secret. That is why we support the Bill. However, we are anxious to ensure that the service operates and is tasked in a proper way and that it is accountable. There will always be certain circumstances—for example, if we are faced with the forces of nazism or fascism or with extreme communist societies—in which the means are justified by the end. But in normal circumstances they are not. The Bill should contain general proscriptions. That is why the amendments are reasonable.

We simply want to ensure that the secret and intelligence services are properly accountable. We recognise their role, going into the next century. We firmly believe that they will be important. Our amendments refer to "serious crime". The security services are important because we know that our society is under attack—by organised crime and drug running and peddling, for example. It is necessary for us to have intelligence on those activities so that we can take the necessary actions to prevent our society from being corrupted.

On the other hand, we feel that we have a point and that some form of proscription should be laid down against the open-ended tasking that is available under clause 1. Even the warranting under later clauses does not sufficiently proscribe the actions that might be taken.

I know that it is enormously difficult to reconcile an effective secret service with effective accountability, but that is at the heart of what a democratic society is about. If we do not resolve that difficult problem in an equitable way, we fail in the construction and operation of our society. There is no provision in the Bill under which the secret and intelligence services could be brought to book. That is why the amendments are good and reasonable.

I know that the Minister will argue that the Intelligence and Security Committee will be set up and will be reported to, but the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister will control the information which is given to that committee. They are the very same people who task the intelligence services with their job. So the Secretary of State will task the intelligence services under clause 1, will have the power to issue them with warrants under clause 5 and will be the only person to whom they are accountable.

We shall discuss the oversight committee under clause 10. Any information which will come into it will have to be laundered by the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister and, even before that, by the intelligence services. I know that my right hon. and hon. Friends will make strong arguments when we discuss clause 10 for giving extra powers to the committee so that it can obtain information and ensure that the intelligence services are accountable.

Clause 1 is ambiguous. It sets few guidelines and controls for the services and their operations. Our amendments deal with their principal roles and the circumstances within which they may operate. The amendments are reasonable and I ask the House to support them.

Mr. Allason: I am anxious about any suggestion of guidelines and controls as identified in clause 1 and especially in amendment No. 6. The Secret Intelligence Service has a wide remit and has consistently operated under strict ministerial controls. I understand that there was only one occasion, in 1956, when it slipped out of that control. That was an unfortunate lapse, which created a considerable internal row and cost Sir John Sinclair, who was the chief at the time, his job. On that occasion, a surveillance operation conducted under the Ordjonikideze went wrong and Buster Crabb lost his life. The Prime Minister was furious. It turned out that the Foreign Office adviser had lost his father on the morning of the day of the authorisation. As a result, the operation was authorised, with unfortunate and disastrous consequences. I do not know of any other occasion on which the service abused its responsibilities. The organisation would argue that on that occasion it had received full authority and that there had perhaps been an error in providing it.

Since that time the organisation has surely always sought Foreign Office consent and ministerial support for each operation. That is why it has never been the subject of the sort of investigations conducted in the United States by the Church committee, former Vice-President Rockefeller and others.

The organisation certainly has a very clean record on assassinations. I recall Sir Dick White being especially anxious when Graham Greene wrote "The Human Factor" and suggested that the chief of the Secret Intelligence Service would authorise the assassination of a foreigner —or anyone else for that matter. Sir Dick White told me that that allegation was profoundly offensive, partly because such action simply was not structurally possible within the organisation and—more to the point—partly because it gave credence to the mythology that had been created around the SIS, which was that it was prepared to brook murder and mayhem. That is most emphatically not the case.

One consequence of that mythology is that it tends to blur the issue when the SIS is mentioned in a criminal trial. When the Secretary of State opened his remarks on Second Reading he gave an example that is extremely relevant to amendment No. 6, describing a case in which the Secret Intelligence Service had provided clandestine surveillance of a drugs suspect in an unnamed country and had been able to provide information that was of enormous use to the authorities.

My worry is about what will happen when someone is brought to trial in this country and the SIS is referred to. That will offer defence counsel a tremendous opportunity to exact great advantage. Defence counsel will be able to tell the jury, "The SIS is involved in this prosecution and we all know about them. They have assassinated people." He will be able to make many completely irrelevant allegations and may compromise the chances of obtaining a conviction. That is a very real worry, especially as the service has never indulged in criminal investigations and as we have a national drugs intelligence unit to co-ordinate intelligence on suspected drugs offences. The unit was set up by Colin Hewett, a distinguished deputy assistant commissioner at Scotland yard and a former head of special branch.

7.15pm

I have strong reservations if a straightforward criminal offence such as drug smuggling, which is not a direct threat to the realm, is to be subject to SIS interference and surveillance, just as I have reservations about the Security Service being involved in anti-terrorist operations. Neither organisation has ever involved itself in such activities. One could interpret those developments by suggesting that the services are taking in washing. With the end of the cold war, one would have thought that there would be quite enough for them to do monitoring the proliferation of nuclear, chemical, biological and bacteriological weapons and other important threats to this country. It is worrying that they are actively seeking work on behalf of the regular police authorities, and it may well compromise criminal prosecutions.

Although I oppose amendment No. 6, I very much hope that two messages will go from the House this evening. The first is that ordinary crime will be dealt with in an ordinary way in the Old Bailey, without screens to protect witnesses or anything of that sort that would smack of special treatment for a special crime; drug smuggling and peddling are criminal offences and should be treated as such. Secondly, the Front-Bench Opposition spokesman should not give any credence to the fact that anything like a shoot-to-kill policy exists; nor should he discuss it. That is absolute nonsense. As far as I am aware, the only shoot-to-kill policy that exists is that exercised by the Provisional IRA.

Mr. Rogers: I agree that ordinary crime ought to be dealt with in the ordinary way by the police force and police officers. But there surely comes a point where, if intelligence is available and one is able to bring a particularly vicious bunch of drug smugglers to book—with the tentacles of organised crime ever present, many people think that we are in grave danger of corrupting our society—there is an argument for secrecy. Surely there is a case for saying that people could give evidence without giving away their identity.

Mr. Allason: That is an interesting point. The hon. Gentleman says that secrecy is necessary when such operations are conducted and he is right. Police officers are all subject to the Official Secrets Act. More to the point, they are used to giving evidence in court, have been trained and are subject to internal discipline. Who has heard of an SIS officer carrying a warrant card or being subject to any discipline that is available to external scrutiny? That does not happen, and there is a good reason for police officers, who are subject to that sort of scrutiny, conducting criminal investigations.

My anxiety relates to the fact that, if SIS officers are involved in criminal prosecutions, they will have to appear in court; as they have never done so before, they will not be very good at it. Special branch officers who give evidence in court are hopeless, usually because they have appeared in court before only once.

It is not just a matter of collecting intelligence, of mounting a successful prosecution and of giving evidence in court; it goes way beyond that. I believe that police officers, not the Secret Intelligence Service, should exercise that function. If we are in such a state that the Secret Intelligence Service is to become a branch of the

police service, as appears to be advocated by the Opposition, that is a very interesting development with considerable implications for human rights.

Mr. Rogers: I know that the hon. Gentleman is an expert at writing fiction, but I wish that he would not exercise that function is relation to what I say. I never said—or even hinted—that the Secret Intelligence Service ought to be a branch of the police force. I said that, in the normal run of events, ordinary crime should be handled by the police, but that I could envisage circumstances whereby, if the witnesses who had to appear before the court were members of the Secret Intelligence Service, the court should allow them to give their evidence in secret or from behind a screen.

Mr. Allason: I appreciate what the hon. Gentleman says. On a point of fact, I must explain that I am primarily an historian—I have written 17 books of non-fiction—although it is true that I have made two not very good attempts at writing thrillers, which are fiction.

I think the hon. Gentleman said that when a crime was particularly vicious or when criminals were particularly determined it might be appropriate to involve the Secret Intelligence Service. I dispute that. I am simply saying that it will be a gift to defence counsel in that it will provide them with an opportunity to muddy the water on behalf of their clients.

However vicious the crime, it must be dealt with by normal criminal law and by police officers who are used to giving evidence in court. To be entirely candid, I am not sure that, in the Secretary of State's example, it would be possible for the prosecution to mount a case or obtain a conviction based on the evidence of an SIS officer who is operating illicitly overseas and collecting clandestine surveillance information. Such information may be useful, but I do not believe that that is an appropriate function of the Secret Intelligence Service and I very much hope that the House will reject amendment No. 6.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: The amendments are trying to limit and, it seems to me—subject to correction from the Opposition Front Bench—specifically focus the remit of the intelligence service. I want to speak in particular to amendment No. 38, in the name of the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen).

We discussed the remit and function of the intelligence service in the debate on the Bill to which this legislation is joined—the Security Services Act 1989 and, through it, the Official Secrets Act 1989. The debate about the remit, function and definition of national security—as set out in the hon. Gentleman's amendment—has exercised the minds of a great many people, including the Mcdonald commission on freedom and security in Canada.

The Government have a great difficulty in this area. I am not unsympathetic to their plight; it is terribly difficult to define and refine what is necessary in these terms without the benefit of a White Paper and without any independent examination of the issues or input from Opposition Members and others. Without a proper examination of what the services do now, how does one judge what should be done?

Clause 1(2)(a) contains the words

"in the interests of national security with particular reference".

The Opposition seek to drop those words and insert the words

"where there is a threat".

I think that the proposal is endeavouring to make a proper and sensible limitation. It then refers to

"the defence and foreign policies of Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom".

I know that the Minister, who has conducted the debate very honourably, will find all manner of reasons for refuting my point, but I can make an interpretation of those words. The "interests of national security" are not defined. There was a savage attack on the foreign policies of Her Majesty's Government in this country. It occurred when the Government tried to bring forward a deeply federalist Bill and make us part of a state in Europe. William Cash of Stafford was clearly subversive and a number of hon. Gentlemen have also pursued the undoing of Her Majesty's domestic and foreign affairs policy. There is no doubt that we gathered together in a covert fashion to discuss these matters. We also sat down and thought about how we could conspire to undermine the Government's attempt to thrust us into a sovereign European state.

The intelligence service—which is no doubt listening intently—is no doubt aware that, if the Secretary of State so deemed it, the clause could be interpreted to mean that, in the interests of national security, that action was contrary to the well-being of the Government. That is why a number of people have tried to limit, or more specifically focus, these clauses—and more power to the Opposition Front Bench and the hon. Member for Leyton.

These are very serious arguments and there are many more points to adduce. We should remember that the intelligence service can link up with the Security Service, and the remit of the Security Service can be transformed at the behest of the Secretary of State and at the request of the head of the service. The structure is very loose; it is not coherent. It is a typical British muddle. It is not even as well defined as the Maxwell Fyfe directive of 1952—I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend will correct me if I have the date wrong.

Where are the limiting clauses in the Bill? The hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) suggests that there are none. That is the truth of the matter. This is a jumble of words that is open to interpretation. After all, did not Mr. Churchill stand in this House and launch a savage attack upon no less than the

"defence and foreign policies of Her Majesty's Government"?

Of course he did.

I refer again to the Mcdonald commission. Where is the limitation of remit? Where is the recognition of the lawful dissent clause? On Second Reading, I said that it is very important to have some declaratory things in a statute covering an area that is so sensitive to the well-being and freedoms that we enjoy as British citizens, such as our understanding of civil liberties. None of that is in the Bill.

I do not want to make a big thing of it, but the Bill should have been incorporated into the Security Service Act 1989. There should be one compendium Bill dealing with the functions of oversight and so on. It should relate to all the services set out in this legislation. Instead we have two pieces of paper and two different, wide definitions. I give a cheer for the Opposition for trying to limit this Bill.

I also accept that, in a sense, the Government already have the Bill; it was given in the House of Lords and in this place. There has been no serious attempt to see whether there was a proper structure in which oversight and all the

[Mr. Richard Shepherd]

other functions set out in this Bill could be pulled together and defined. First and central to this was the definition sought by the hon. Member for Leyton.

Mr. Rogers: I think that the hon. Member is being a little unfair to the members of the Committee, who worked hard to put up very substantial arguments in order to alter the framework of the Bill in its final form.

Mr. Shepherd: I am suitably rebuked; that is a fair point. I am crying out, in my anguish, about the way in which one does business. There was no White Paper. There has been no effort to maintain in what way this is a proper security force of the realm, what its definition and focus is and how one relates all these points to it.

I wanted to make a brief speech. Most of the arguments have been addressed by the Security Service Act. Once one has a pre-delivered piece of legislation, which is secure in the heart of the Executive and not open to any form of discussion, the House is traduced because it can respond only along the tramlines of the thinking of the present Executive about these matters.

I do not believe that the Bill, once enacted, will last for ever, if only because the civil liberties lobby and others will want greater security and definition on certain points. For that reason, I did not mean to criticise or to imply criticism of the Committee. I just wanted to make it clear that I support the principle behind the amendments. I understand why it is unlikely that they will be accepted, because the Executive have a view of how these matters should be conducted. They do not want any genuine limitation governing the recognition of lawful dissent, nor do they believe that it should be excluded from the remit of the security services. We are therefore at the behest of the benign intent of the Secretary of State whose direction those services follow.

7.30 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) for his support of new clause 2, the case for which he emphasised with as eloquent a contribution as all the others that he has made throughout the passage of the Bill. His voice should be echoed loudly on the Opposition Benches as well.

The hon. Member referred to amendment No. 38, which is a modest one. It calls for a definition of the terms "national security", " economic well-being" and "serious crime". After all, hundreds of millions of pounds are spent by the security services on activities relating specifically to those terms. The Government should attempt to define what they mean. My modest amendment would also ensure that such definition should be contained in an order, which should be renewed—subject to debate—at least once every five years.

In parliamentary questions I have asked the Government to define the terms "national security", "economic well-being" and "serious crime". The Government replied that those terms are well understood, but, given the seriousness of the matter, that answer is not good enough.

At the moment we leave it to the intelligence service, the people who carry out the relevant tasks, to interpret what those terms mean. We might as well say, "We are leaving it up to you, chaps and lasses, to interpret them as you like." That is an extremely dangerous course to follow. I am not suggesting that those in the security services are not good people, but we are aware of instances where those in the intelligence service have attempted to subvert legitimate Governments in this country. We are also aware that the powers of the security services have been misused in other countries. The death last week of President Nixon brings to mind such an example. Those powers were also misused in Nazi Germany. Just because Britain has not suffered from the problem to that extent—as far as we are aware—does not mean that we should not have the legislative safeguards that other countries have thought it necessary to introduce.

The definition of the terms set out in amendment No. 38 gives a legal basis for the actions that members of the security services take. If they step outside their proper remit, they could, one hopes, be brought to account by the Intelligence and Security Committee. It is wrong to leave the definition of those terms to the people who carry out particular functions connected with them.

The matter should have been dealt with in the Security Service Act 1989, section 1 of which states that the function of the service should be the

"protection of national security and, in particular, its protection against threats from espionage, terrorism and sabotage, from the activities of agents of foreign powers and from actions intended to overthrow or undermine parliamentary democracy by political, industrial or violent means."

That definition gave the security services the scope to hold personal data on individuals and its terms are potentially extremely wide. The use of the words "in particular" makes it clear that, although the security services place emphasis on those activities mentioned in section 1, the terms of the Act do not exclude other activities deemed as relevant to national security. The security services could interpret political demonstrations as a threat to national security or the activities of right-wing Conservative Members protesting about Maastricht, as the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills said. A clearer definition of the function of the security services is therefore needed in the Bill, because whether certain other activities fall within the remit of MI5 or MI6 is, at the moment, left to be determined by members of those services. That cannot be right.

My amendment would oblige the Secretary of State to give the definitions of the terms "national security", "economic well-being" and "serious crime" and would allow the House to approve them at least once in every Parliament. That approval would give those special powers the legitimacy that they require. I do not think that a debate every five years to renew and consider those definitions is too much to ask for, especially when we compare that with the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which comes up for renewal every year. At least such a debate would give hon. Members who are not members of the Intelligence and Security Committee the opportunity to debate the functions of the security services.

A debate every five years would at least give the public a little more confidence in the work of the security services. At the moment such confidence is even lacking in the legitimate work of those services. The Government should improve parliamentary oversight by offering important definitions of the three terms included in my amendment.

I am sorry to note that during the passage of the Bill the Government have not accepted any amendments bar a minor one. They pushed the Bill through Committee and

presumably they will do likewise in another place. The Government should be more flexible and I hope that they will accept my modest amendment or, if not, will accept a similar one in another place.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Before I deal with the four amendments before the House, I should like to make some general observations that apply to those amendments, but are not particular to them.

When talking about the functions and the roles of the agencies, as we are in the context of the amendments, it is important to set the debate within the framework of the definitions and the checks and balances that are provided by the Bill and the general framework of the law. I would therefore like to remind the House of the framework within which the agencies operate.

To start with, clause 1 does two things. First, it defines the functions of the intelligence service and defines the circumstances in which those functions can be exercised. Secondly, in relation to interference with property or with wireless telegraphy, it provides circumstances in which applications must be made, for approval, to the Secretary of State—that is the warrant procedure. It further provides that acts that would be unlawful by reason of the Criminal Justice Act 1948—acts done abroad—can be rendered lawful only if they are authorised by the clause 7 authorisation procedure. It provides the mechanisms whereby complaints to the tribunal can be made. It sets up and establishes a commissioner whose function and role is to oversee the exercise by the Secretary of State of the clause 5 warranty and clause 7 authorisation procedures. It creates the oversight committee, the remit of which is set out in clause 10.

Equally importantly, all the functions of the agencies are regulated by the ordinary law of the country, save and to the extent that it might otherwise be relaxed, either by the terms of the Bill or—we are speaking also of the Security Service Act 1989—by some other ordinary operation of law.

That is the framework in which the agencies operate. I adopt what my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) said about the liability of members of the agency to the ordinary criminal law. If the members of the agencies do something that contravenes the ordinary criminal law—

Mr. Richard Shepherd: Without the authority of a warrant.

Mr. Hogg: I was going to make the point. Unless it is covered by one of the procedures that I have been referring to, they are liable to appear before an ordinary criminal court.

Mr. Rogers: The Minister sets out and displays a structure of accountability and checks and balances and he is putting it in that context, but—

Mr. Richard Shepherd: It is part of the Bill.

Mr. Rogers: It is absolutely true—it is part of the Bill and we are coming to it. All those procedures are in a tight ring of secrecy. The Secretary of State appoints the members; the Secretary of State screens the information; a report is made to the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister. It is nonsense to suggest that those are accountable structures, especially to Parliament.

Mr. Hogg: I do not agree. To start with the last argument that I made, if an act contravenes the ordinary criminal law of the country the act complained of will be investigated by the police. They act independently. If, for example—*[Interruption.]* If it is warranted, it is covered by the clause 5 procedure, provided that the clause 5 procedure applies. The hon. Gentleman did not seem to focus on the fact that the clause 5 procedure applies only to cases involving entry to or interference with property or wireless telegraphy, and has nothing to do with the general points that he was making about murder and physical injury to individuals and so on. Insofar as those acts are done within the jurisdiction, they are criminal unless another defence applies, such as legitimate self-defence.

That is the general framework within which one operates. I shall now discuss the four amendments that the House is debating. Amendment No. 3 is designed to confine the competence of the intelligence service to circumstances where it can be said that there is a threat to national security. I believe that that is unduly restrictive and I would not commend it to the House. One of the functions of the intelligence service is to further and advance the national interest. Such a purpose can well exist even in the absence of a threat to national security. Let me illustrate that, because I hope that the House will be persuaded by the argument.

It is obviously in the country's interests to find out as much as we can about the military capacity of various countries or the terrorist capacity of various organisations. That interest might—probably does—exist even in the absence of a direct threat. We have every interest in trying to discover the attitude towards various policy issues of various Governments or organisations in the middle east, although one could not, in all honesty, say that there was a threat, or an obvious and direct threat, to the national interest.

7.45 pm

We have every interest in investigating proliferation —channels of proliferation; risks of proliferation; where arms come from; where they go to. One would often be pushed to say that that constituted a direct threat to the United Kingdom. We have every interest in trying to identify the stability of various Governments, friendly and unfriendly, and it will be difficult to say, in that context, that there will always be a risk to our national interest.

It is unduly restrictive to confine the competence of the intelligence service to those circumstances in which it can be said that there exists a threat to the national interest.

Mr. Rogers: I cannot follow the Minister's argument when he says that the Bill says that the function of the Secret Intelligence Service—I presume that the purpose of the Bill is to delineate the functions—is to further and advance the national interest. There is no mention of that in the Bill. It mentions "national security" in clause 1(2)(a) and then it speaks about

"interests of the economic well-being of the United Kingdom".

However, for the Minister to justify his argument under a general term of national interest is to create another dimension in addition to national security.

Mr. Hogg: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman may not have been following the argument as closely as I might have wished him to do—or perhaps I am at fault. There is a difference between saying that competence exists only where there is a threat, and saying that competence exists

[Mr. Hogg]

where the purpose of what is being done is to further the national interest. It is true that I have taken a broad phrase because otherwise I spend a lot of time summarising the meaning of sub-paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) and, for the purposes of this discussion, I am subsuming (a), (b) and (c) into a general phrase.

The difficulty with amendment No. 3 is that it allows the intelligence service to act only when there is a threat, yet there are many circumstances in which I suspect that 80 or 90 per cent. of Members of the House—not that there are many Members here to make that assessment—would wish the intelligence service to act even if one could not, in honesty, say that there was a threat.

Mr. Cohen: The Minister has made an interesting statement and he has broadened the scope of national interest by saying that the intelligence service is furthering it. Will he say, for example, that the coup in which the British were involved, which brought down Mussadeq in Iran and put the Shah into power, was furthering the national interest? Also, who would have made that decision, according to the logic of the Minister's argument?

Mr. Hogg: Both sides agreed in Committee that we would not discuss specific cases or alleged incidents. The hon. Gentleman says that I am furthering, or at least developing, the responsibility of the intelligence service, but I assure him that I am not. Many times on Second Reading and in Committee I argued, as did my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, that the purposes of the intelligence service include the furthering, the forwarding or whatever word one wishes to use, of the national interest, and that they are not confined to those circumstances in which there can be said to be a threat.

The second of the amendments relates to the question of economic well-being. The amendment contemplates—it was not spoken to in the debate, so I will be brief—that the word "substantially" should be placed in front of the phrase "economic well-being". That has real disadvantages and no counter-balancing advantages. In promoting that argument, I first return to the general constraints which I have mentioned and which I will not repeat now. Secondly, the intelligence service responds to tasking by the Joint Intelligence Committee. Thirdly, when resources are scarce there is a natural reluctance on the part of any agency to waste its time on trivial matters. The agency would be concerned only with matters of substance; it would not be concerned with trivial matters.

Such matters would include, for instance, the price and availability of commodities, financial and monetary policies of countries that might have an impact on the United Kingdom, activities of individuals abroad that might discredit financial institutions in the United Kingdom and, perhaps, the promotion of British economic interests abroad, in a variety of ways.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South) *rose—*

Mr. Hogg: I see that the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) is becoming restless; I give way to him.

Mr. Mullin: The Minister may wish to consider another example which seems fairly prevalent. We have developed a habit of spying on foreign companies that compete with British companies, and rewarding British companies with titbits of information picked up through GCHQ or elsewhere in return for unspecified favours. Is that justifiable?

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman is asking me to comment on allegations, which I will not do. The question is whether particular activities fall within the functions defined in clause 1, and the circumstances in which those functions can be exercised.

Mr. Mullin *rose—*

Mr. Hogg: I will give way, but I shall not add to what I have just said.

Mr. Mullin: Will the Minister forget about specific examples and simply deal hypothetically with the example that I gave? Would such action be justifiable in the terms of the Bill?

Mr. Hogg: Come, come: the hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that my general attitude is not to discuss hypothetical cases, save in the most general context. Although it might be fun to do that, I do not think that it would be a good way in which to spend the House's time.

I have described the type of circumstances in which economic well-being is an interest to be forwarded or protected. The question that then arises is whether the word "substantially" improves the Bill in any way. I do not believe that it does. The concept of what is and what is not substantial is, of course, subjective, and I do not see how it can add to the Bill—although it might make the lives of individual officers rather more difficult.

Moreover, many of the activities that I have described —which I suspect the House would regard as desirable —might not be said to have substantial significance when judged against the weight and size of the British economy. We would find ourselves precluding desirable activities that satisfied all other criteria because, in relation to the weight and size of the British economy, they could not be described as substantial.

Mr. Rogers: The Minister said that officers would be placed in a very difficult position. I understand that the joint intelligence machinery tasks MI6 to carry out the functions involved; surely it would be able to gauge whether certain activities were substantially in the country's economic interests. The purpose of the amendment is solely to tighten the rules on what the service can do and to ensure that it carries out what the Minister has rightly described as large-scale generic functions.

Mr. Hogg: That is not true, because we are talking about a subjective test—which, moreover, might not be fulfilled in any particular enterprise, because of the relationship between the economic activity being investigated and the overall size of the British economy. As there is a mismatch between the two, the test would not be satisfied—although most people would be pleased to support the objective.

Amendment No. 6—to which my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Brownhills has spoken from time to time—is defective and should be rejected, although the Opposition Members who tabled it have tried to take account of some of the arguments that I advanced in Committee. First, if the amendment were passed, the

intelligence service could not intervene in respect of threats or attacks against employees of British companies abroad who were not citizens of the United Kingdom. That is a bit peculiar. Secondly, we all have an interest in fighting terrorism, but in its present form the amendment would prevent us from intervening in—or assisting, for instance, the French Government in frustrating—an act of terrorism in France. I find that difficult to accept.

My hon. Friend the Whip has just entered the Chamber. I feel a little nervous when I see him; does he want me to stop? If so, I shall be brief.

My third objection is this. Crime is pretty international; there are many criminal acts in which we would want the intelligence service to become involved, but which do not have a direct or immediate impact on the United Kingdom or its citizens. Good examples are the smuggling of arms and drugs, child prostitution and international pornography: we have a legitimate interest in the investigation of each of those classes of crime, in the obtaining of information and, in many circumstances, attempting to interrupt them, but in many cases it would be impossible to say that their immediate consequence would be an impact on the United Kingdom or its citizens. They would therefore be outwith the provisions of the amendment.

Finally, let me comment on a point made by the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) and supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Brownhills. *[Interruption.]* He did support it.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: My constituency is Aldridge-Brownhills.

Mr. Hogg: I am terribly sorry. I am out of practice: I should hear my hon. Friend speak more often.

What hon. Members are saying is basically this: "We cannot ourselves define the various concepts, but we want the Government to do it by way of an order-making power. Furthermore, we want to debate it every five years." That is the broad effect of the amendment.

I think that it is extremely difficult to define national security in statutory terms; incidentally, I think the same about economic well-being. My view is reinforced by what the Commissioner of the Security Services, Lord Justice Stuart-Smith, said in his 1990 report. Effectively, he said that it was very difficult to define national security in statutory terms, although it could be recognised easily enough.

Labour has encountered the problem in the past. The sex and race discrimination legislation of the mid-1970s refers to national security without giving any definitions or amplifications, because it is so difficult to define. I therefore do not think that it would be at all easy to secure a comprehensive definition of those two phrases which would be satisfactory.

I accept that the position is rather different when it comes to serious crime, which can sometimes—and for some purposes—be defined. It was done in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, in—I think—the Interception of Communications Act 1985 and in other legislation. It should not be forgotten, however, that in this instance we would also have to consider crime committed abroad, because that comes within the definition. I do not think that it would serve a serious purpose; serious crime is easy enough to recognise, even if it is not defined.

Let me make two more points. First, I am against order-making powers and I am rather surprised that my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) is not against them as well. As hon. Members and my hon. Friend know full well, an order laid before the House is not subject to amendment—it has to be accepted all or not at all. Of course, that is just what the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) is anxious that we should not do in relation to Northern Ireland. The fact that a draft must be placed before the House and debated before the order is made is an attempt to mitigate the defects associated with the order-making procedure, but it does not solve it.

8 pm

Mr. Richard Shepherd: As I understand it, the Procedure Committee is at this moment reporting, or has already reported, on how orders may be made in other ways, but that was not my point. I was querying whether there are to be limitations. The remit outlined in the Bill is very large. I agree with my right hon. and learned Friend that the definitions to which he referred are extremely difficult and they have exercised minds considerably, which is why I come back to the issue of limitation—what the services may not do. This is a compendium Bill but security service legislation exists in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Limits can be imposed, which was the reason for my general support for the amendment. Lawful dissent was one of the issues that I raised but which my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister did not cover, although perhaps he is coming to it. What constitutes the foreign policy of the United Kingdom? Would Mr. William Cash and Sir Teddy Taylor be objects of interest to the services? Are their activities lawful dissent? Should they be limited under the Bill? As I understand it, if the Secretary of State, using his warrant, set out to seek information about them, the Bill would allow him to do so.

Mr. Hogg: There are various ways in which one can try to control the exercise of given powers by the agencies. We have tried a mixed approach by defining the powers and subjecting the exercise of powers to various controls. It was for that reason that I began with general observations, pointing out the definition of the powers and the circumstances in which they could be exercised, and went on to speak about the complaints procedure, the clause 5 and clause 7 procedures, the commissioner's role, the ordinary criminal law and the oversight committee. The Bill creates a range of controls, checks and balances which impact on the functions and the circumstances in which the functions are exercisable.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills was concerned—at least, I thought that he was, although he was perhaps being more humorous than I realised—that his acts a propos the Maastricht Bill might fall within the scope of the intelligence service. He mentioned only the circumstances in which the functions were exercisable, but he will, of course, have been the first to note that the functions outlined in clause 1—the underpinning provisions—relate to

"the actions or intentions of persons outside the British Islands".

Although I might wish on occasion that my hon. Friend was outside the British Isles, I have to say that he does not satisfy that criterion. Therefore, the circumstances do not even begin to apply in the case that he postulated because the functions do not exist in that case.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: The two Acts to which my right hon. and learned Friend referred are linked and I

[Mr. Richard Shepherd]

accept what he said about accountability and various checks and balances, but the point is to assist Ministers' accountability and to identify responsibility—I believe that that must be at the heart of the Bill. Mr. Cash, or my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford, was in Paris on Friday launching a new programme. In this small world, it is easy for British citizens to gather together quite ordinarily in, for example, Paris. I wanted to ensure that the Bill was not drafted in such a way that it could apply in that case, which is why I was querying its limitations.

Mr. Hogg: Looking at the smiling face of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle) and the rather less smiling face of my hon. Friend the Member for Stevenage (Mr. Wood), I am conscious of the fact that the House wishes to get on with its business.

I can tell my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills that, although there may be arguments against the Bill, his is not one of them. The suggestion that he and our hon. Friends will be chased by the intelligence service is not credible.

Mr. Rogers: I am afraid that the Minister has not dealt with the arguments in favour of the amendments. I reiterate the fact that we agree that the security and intelligence services must continue to be effective, but, as I said at the outset, that has to be set against the background of the application of the rule of law. The amendments are intended to focus the functions and capabilities of the intelligence services.

The Minister has refuted our arguments primarily by saying that the Bill contains a series of checks and balances. He said that there was a complaints procedure, a tribunal, a commission and an oversight committee so we need not worry about the functions that we give to the intelligent services. He said that it did not matter how broadly they were based because there were checks and balances. However, as we said in Committee ad nauseam, and as we shall continue to say, it is a completely closed circle.

Through the Joint Intelligence Committee, the Secretary of State tasks the secret services. If necessary, he issues the warrant for them to operate outside the law. They report to him, and he reports to the oversight committee and launders any information before doing so. The Prime Minister also has the function of filtering material and even the heads of the secret services have the right to scrutinise material before it goes to the oversight committee. If the Minister thinks that that is an effective check and balance against the functions set out in clause 1, I am afraid that he is living in cloud cuckoo land.

It is no good the Minister saying, as he did whenever he was challenged on specific examples—by, for example, my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin)—that history begins tomorrow and never mind what happened in the past. We have seen how the services operated in the past and we now have the opportunity to make the necessary changes in the Bill. Why not make those changes now so that there would be no need for orders? The Bill could have been drafted more sensibly.

We have always said that clause 1 was ambiguous, which is why we tabled reasonable amendments. The Minister cannot get away with saying that we do not need to accept the word "substantially" because the secret intelligence services would not be interested in trivia. Why not? Because they do not have the money. Presumably, if they did have the money, they would be interested in trivia. However, they should not have the right to interfere except where it is "substantially" in the interests of Great Britain's economy or general well-being.

The Minister said that drug smuggling and child pornography, among other things, do not have a "serious effect on law and order", to cite amendment No. 6. I am afraid that the Minister is wrong because organised crime is funded largely from drug smuggling and drug peddling. There are many ancillaries to organised crime which fund these activities and which have a serious effect on law and order in the United Kingdom.

These are appropriate amendments and they properly introduce the concept of natural justice into the Bill. For that reason, we shall press them to a vote.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 123, Noes 272.

Division No. 222] **[8.08 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene	Hall, Mike
Ainger, Nick	Hanson, David
Ashton, Joe	Hinchliffe, David
Austin-Walker, John	Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Barnes, Harry	Home Robertson, John
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.	Hoon, Geoffrey
Bell, Stuart	Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Bennett, Andrew F.	Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Benton, Joe	Johnston, Sir Russell
Bermingham, Gerald	Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Boyes, Roland	Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Bradley, Keith	Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Burden, Richard	Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Callaghan, Jim	Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*	Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	Kilfoyle, Peter
Canavan, Dennis	Kirkwood, Archy
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*	Lewis, Terry
Clapham, Michael	Llwyd, Elfyn
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*	Lynne, Ms Liz
Coffey, Ann	Mackinlay, Andrew
Cohen, Harry	McMaster, Gordon
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*	McWilliam, John
Cox, Tom	Maddock, Mrs Diana
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Mandelson, Peter
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*	Marek, Dr John
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John	Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Dalis, Cynog	Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Darling, Alistair	Maxton, John
Davidson, Ian	Michael, Alun
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge Hl)*	Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Dewar, Donald	Morley, Elliot
Dixon, Don	Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Dowd, Jim	Mudie, George
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth	Mullin, Chris
Eastham, Ken	O'Brien, Michael *(N W'shire)*
Enright, Derek	O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Etherington, Bill	Parry, Robert
Flynn, Paul	Patchett, Terry
Foster, Rt Hon Derek	Pickthall, Colin
Fraser, John	Pike, Peter L.
Galloway, George	Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Gerrard, Neil	Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John	Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.	Raynsford, Nick
Godsiff, Roger	Redmond, Martin
Gordon, Mildred	Reid, Dr John
Graham, Thomas	Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*	Rogers, Allan
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*	Rowlands, Ted
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*	Sedgemore, Brian
Gunnell, John	Sheerman, Barry

Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Speller, John
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Warning, Robert N
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. John Cummings.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Boneor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & C'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Egger, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shephard, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Robert G. Hughes.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 5

WARRANTS: GENERAL

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: I beg to move amendment No. 15, in page 3, line 47, leave out

'issued by the Secretary of State under this section'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): I understand that with this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 33, in page 4, line 10, after 'Act', insert

'in so far as they relate solely to the protection of national security and the economic well-being of the United Kingdom'.

No. 34, in page 4, line 12, after 'above', insert

'which are exercised in pursuance of the objectives mentioned in subsection 2(a) and (b) of that section'.

No. 35, in page 4, line 14, after 'above', insert

'which are exercised in pursuance of the objectives mentioned in section 3(2)(a) and (b) above'.

No. 36, in page 4, line 22, at end insert—

'( ) A judge of the High Court or Court of Session may, on an application made by the Security Service, the Intelligence Service or GCHQ, issue a warrant under this section authorising the taking, subject to subsection (3) below, of such action as is specified in the warrant in respect of any property so specified or in respect of wireless telegraphy so specified if he—

(a) thinks it necessary for the action to be taken on the ground that it is likely to be of substantial value in assisting, as the case may be,—

(i) the Security Service in carrying out any of its functions under the 1989 Act in so far as they relate solely to the prevention and detection of serious crime, or

(ii) the Intelligence Service in carrying out any of its functions under section 1 above which are exercised in pursuance of the objectives mentioned in subsection (2)(c) of that section; or

(iii) GCHQ in carrying out any function which falls within section 3(1)(a) above which are exercised in pursuance of the objectives mentioned in section 3(2)(c) above; and

(b) is satisfied that what the action seeks to achieve cannot reasonably be achieved by other means; and

(c) is satisfied that satisfactory arrangements are in force under section 2(2)(a) of the 1989 Act (duties of the Director-General of the Security Service), section 2(2)(a) above or section 4(2)(a) above with respect to the disclosure of information obtained by virtue of this section and that any information obtained under the warrant will be subject to those arrangements.'.

No. 18, in clause 6, page 4, line 40, leave out from beginning to end of line 9 on page 5 and insert—

'(1) A warrant shall, unless renewed, cease to have effect at the end of the period of six months beginning with the day on which it was issued.

(2) An application for a warrant from a court shall be heard ex parte.

(3) If at any time the Security Service, the Intelligence Service or GCHQ is satisfied that the action authorised by the warrant is no longer necessary it shall apply to the Court or the Secretary of State as appropriate for the warrant to be cancelled'.

Mrs. Prentice: Clause 5 provides for the Secretary of State to issue—on an application by the Security Service, Secret Intelligence Service or GCHQ—warrants authorising action in respect of property or wireless telegraphy. We believe that it is not appropriate for the Secretary of State to be the arbiter in the issuing of warrants.

I served as a magistrate in Inner London for many years, and was called upon from time to time by the Metropolitan police to issue search warrants. Such requests were made in court or at my own home, sometimes late at night. There have been occasions when the validity of warrants signed by magistrates has been called into question.

The rules were changed to ensure that warrants authorised by magistrates are properly signed and record the correct time to ensure that the police or others do not misuse that procedure. That is done not just to protect the person against whom the warrant is issued but to safeguard the prosecution. There is nothing worse than for a case to fail because a warrant was not properly signed or other technicalities were not correctly observed. I have great sympathy with anyone who is required to sign a warrant and to ensure that it is fully justified.

The suggestion that the Secretary of State should sign warrants causes me concern. That Minister is involved in the activities of the security services, so cannot be considered independent of them, and an adequate check on the warrant is essential. In constitutional terms, any Secretary of State—and this is a non-party political point—is part of the Executive in the same way as the Security Service.

In criminal cases, warrants are generally authorised by a magistrate before a search of someone's house is lawful. Often, that authorisation is done in open court. It is rare, rightly, for a warrant to be authorised elsewhere. Right hon. and hon. Members and people outside might think that a judge is not necessarily the best person to authorise a warrant, because it is too sensitive a task; that judges have their own views of society and may be prejudiced by them. However, there are examples of the courts being charged with dealing with matters of secrecy reasonably well. The judge in the Matrix Churchill case was able to examine sensitive material and to ensure that it was properly adjudicated.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There may be some misunderstanding. I have carefully examined the amendments, and it is clear that they relate only to those applications that are founded on the serious crime category, and that it is only in respect of that category that it is suggested by the amendments that the warrant should be issued by a judge. They do not relate to the other two classes.

Mrs. Prentice: I am trying to make the point, in relation to the principle behind the issuing of warrants, that it is questionable whether a politician who is part of the Executive is necessarily the appropriate person to make warrants available.

Mr. Rogers: The Minister is not following the amendments properly. Amendment No. 36 seeks to insert a new subsection at the end of clause 5, which relates to "the prevention of detection of serious crime."

That is the generic clause covering the issuing of warrants. Amendment No. 15 seeks to delete from clause 5(1) the words

"issued by the Secretary of State under this section."

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not want to be tiresome because we can always debate the principle, but the amendments relate only to applications in respect of serious crime. I am prepared to debate the generality, but I am faced with a narrow class of amendments and it would be a pity if there were any misunderstanding.

Mr. Rogers: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I accept that we—like the Government, normally—can get the drafting wrong, but amendment No. 36—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Gentleman raising a point of order for me?

Mr. Rogers: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Unfortunately, I allowed the hon. Gentleman to continue a debate across the Floor of the House with the Minister. If the hon. Gentleman has a point of order, he must make it now, to the Chair.

Mr. Rogers: My purpose is to bring the debate in order, because the Minister suggested that our amendments apply only to a particular aspect of the Bill. My point of order is that our amendments do not relate solely to clause 5(3) —which begins,

"A warrant authorising the taking of action in support of the prevention or detection of serious crime"—

but to the end of clause 5, where we seek to insert a new subsection beginning:

"A judge of the High Court or Court of Session".

As amendment No. 15 seeks to delete from clause 5(1) the words

"issued by the Secretary of State under this section",

it was necessary to introduce later in clause 5 the provision for a warrant to be issued by a High Court or Court of Session judge.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The debate has been in order so far. I would have intervened if it had strayed out of order.

Mrs. Prentice: I am not entirely sure whether the House now knows exactly where it stands.

8.30 pm

One of the fundamental principles of human rights is respect for the rule of law, and I am concerned that that principle should be set out in the Bill. It was argued in Committee that if someone objected to the issuing of a warrant, he could go to a tribunal. Unfortunately, that does not satisfy the fundamental human rights with which I am concerned. It is important that the individual is aware before a tribunal is involved that he can challenge what is happening. Once he appears before a tribunal, the warrant has been issued and the telephone tapping or other surveillance has taken place. At that stage it is difficult to put things right.

If we allow the Secretary of State to issue warrants to authorise various actions, we shall fall short of the provisions set out in article 6 of the European convention on human rights. If we are signatories to the convention, we should make some attempt to go along with its provisions. As I have said, the courts are capable of dealing with matters of secrecy.

Some of my right hon. and hon. Friends say that the judges are political in a sense and may make decisions accordingly. Indeed, they have made some incredibly bad decisions. A Labour Government would entrench human rights; they would introduce a Bill of Rights. I would like to see a written constitution to entrench the rights of individual citizens. The judges would have to comply with it, and that would make a great difference. I look to the future to see that system apply rather than the present one.

If we leave appeal until the time when the tribunal is involved, there is no possible redress. That means that the complainant will have no access to information and will not know why he is in some way threatening national security. The tribunal can decide only whether the service has reasonable grounds for its actions. There will not be an adequate check on the Secretary of State when it comes to the decision to issue a warrant. That is why we feel that going before a High Court judge and ensuring that decisions are made in open court will protect the individual citizen as well as protecting the security services by ensuring that they have proper means whereby they can continue with acts that would otherwise be illegal.

We are talking of acts that would be unlawful without the support of a warrant. That is crucial to our consideration of these matters. If we allow people to participate in unlawful acts for the very best of reasons —national security—we must be sure that they do so under the strictest provisions. It is for these reasons that I commend the amendment to the House.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: I do not know whether the amendments are correctly drawn and I am happy to accept the advice of my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State on that matter. All the matters that we are considering can be corrected when the Bill returns to the other place. My right hon. and learned Friend can give an undertaking that they will be addressed there.

It is unthinkable that warrants should not be issued and authorised by a judge. That is the first principle. It is outrageous to think that a Minister should himself determine what should be lawful and by his own warrant attest that that which is unlawful is lawful. The structural problem is that essentially a Minister's acccountability is to himself. There should be judicial determination.

This is a land of laws. The history of England and the United Kingdom is built on those laws, and in those laws we find our defence. Judicial intervention is proper and appropriate.

We talk about the security of individuals and whether they are to be trusted. The very people who we regard dubiously today may be Ministers of the Crown tomorrow. The man on the Opposition Benches who we suspect may be the very Foreign Secretary who issues the warrants that we are discussing. We must not be so suspicious of ourselves internally that we exclude a great democracy. After all, these systems are designed to defend our democracy.

Part of our democracy and defence is through the courts, where there is an independent judiciary. That is why it is entirely respectable to argue that there should be judicial intervention and that warrants should be issued on the authority of a justice of this land, commissioned by the Queen, due process and so on. If that is not the position, everything in the Bill will be at the behest of the Government of the day alone.

As things stand, the Government appoint everyone in the system. They appoint the commissioner and they appoint the committee of parliamentarians. I do not, of course, want to give the impression that these matters are related. I recognise that they work in their own way, but they do not reinforce accountability and identify responsibility. That is why it is important that these processes should be open to the courts. It may be that the courts will find a way of entering the arena, but the relevant provisions are closely drafted. I would like to think that such a distinguished lawyer as my right hon. and learned Friend would appreciate the merits of the courts.

I understand that there are difficulties, one of which is Matrix Churchill. Judges seem to be far too independent and sometimes rather inquiring. But that is what we want them to be, and that is their function. If we cannot trust the judges, who do we trust in this system? We need a balance. Not everything should be in the hands of the Executive and of one-party government. That is why we talk about

[Mr. Richard Shepherd]

accountable government. It is important to recognise the judicial tradition. As I have said, this is a land of laws, and within those laws we find our freedoms.

I know that my right hon. and learned Friend will appreciate what I am saying. I am sure that he has charged people for giving similar advice in his time. I hope that he will accept the spirit behind the amendments and ensure that in the other place—no less a place—there is recognition of the validity of the argument.

Mr. Cohen: I support my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice). There should be judicial authorisation when it comes to the issuing of warrants.

It was reported in *The Guardian* on 1 April—I hope that it was not an April Fool's joke—that the Home Secretary had authorised 883 telephone tapping warrants and that the Secretary of State for Scotland had issued 112. Apparently, the Home Secretary had authorised 105 mail openings and the Secretary of State for Scotland had authorised one. The article did not tell us what the Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland had authorised in respect of mail openings or telephone tapping. There was no attempt to present the broad numbers. It would be useful for the House to have that information. It would also be useful to know whether the warrants related to one person or whether one warrant related to many people. Such information would be worth having. Was there judicial authorisation for any of the warrants to which I have referred or were they all issued purely on ministerial decisions?

The warrant system is a mess. We must bear in mind the opportunity to gather information about people and retain it under the Data Protection Act 1984. The Lindop committee reported that data protection problems posed even greater problems than the systems that are maintained by the police. It recommended that

"any exemption provided . . . in the interests of national security should be strictly circumscribed"

and that

"any necessary exemption should be granted personally by the Home Secretary."

It was suggested that we should apply the best practice from abroad, and those practices involved the judiciary. Instead we got section 27 of the Data Protection Act which enabled an exemption on national security grounds. As a result, the security services can collect information on people without the need for warrants that apply in other Acts such as the Interception of Communications Act 1985 and the Security Service Act 1989.

We have three methods of obtaining information and they all have different aspects. The security services may not like a Minister's decision. A Minister may not wish to sign a warrant. For example, the President of the Board of Trade said that he did not want to sign the public interest immunity certificate in relation to the Matrix Churchill employees. A Minister may think that there is not a good enough reason for telephone tapping or whatever. The security services can take the same action under another guise, and can do so retrospectively. They can collect the information, then get the Minister to sign a certificate under section 27 of the Data Protection Act. They can say that it was all authorised retrospectively. That cannot be done under the other Acts.

The issuing of warrants for the collection of information should be brought together under one system. That system should have judicial involvement, as has been said by my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East and by the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd). That is the purpose of the amendment. The Minister should address that, otherwise the system is a free-for-all and the security services can do what they like. The structure of oversight referred to earlier is meaningless in that context.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I invite the Opposition not to press the amendment to a Division because I assure them that it is defective and that the only provision for judicial review of the warrant procedure relates to the serious crime category. However, I am prepared to debate the general principle, if that is in order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The real question before the House is whether in the three categories the warrants should be issued by the Secretary of State or by a judge. I strongly urge the House to accept that the warrants should be issued by a judge —*[Interruption.]* Forgive me, I mean the Secretary of State. I was thinking of a suitable compliment to pay my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd). The warrant should be issued by the Secretary of State.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills made an impassioned speech in favour of judicial intervention. He fails to grasp fully that this is not a judicial process. It is not a judicial process because the concepts are administrative and policy based and are not judicial. One can see if one looks at the categories involved—they can be found in clause 1(2)(a), (b) and (c)—that they are policy issues. There are the interests of national security with regard to defence and foreign policy and the interests of economic well-being. Those two categories are clearly policy issues. A judge is in no way qualified to determine policy issues of that sort.

Hon. Members might say that judges are competent to consider questions of serious crime. Yes, they are. But, serious crime contemplated by this Bill extends abroad. The process envisaged in the one amendment that bites is not really a judicial process. It is an ex parte application without any consideration of the arguments or of the person who will be affected by the warrant. The amendment simply calls for a question of policy to be judged by a judge who does not have any experience in the policy areas and does not have the opportunity of hearing the person who will be affected by the warrant. It is an administrative and executive process, not a judicial process.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: Is not the argument self serving? The House is trying to obtain proper definitions by which the judge can measure whether a warrant is appropriate. The Minister rejected proper definitions and then said that it would not be appropriate precisely because he has rejected the proper definitions. That is what I call a self-serving argument. One can get round that by properly defining the limiting clauses for which we have argued before. The judge could then intervene.

8.45 pm

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend does less justice to his case than he should. The problem is one of concepts, not of definition. It is not a judicial issue. National security with reference to defence and foreign policy and economic well-being are not judicial issues.

Mr. Rogers: The issue of a warrant is a judicial process. The issue of a warrant allows someone to act outside the law. The general principles of the functions and abilities of the secret intelligence services are not in question. We are asking someone to act in a judicial capacity by issuing a warrant to allow someone to operate outside the law.

Mr. Hogg: The issue of a warrant is sometimes a judicial process and sometimes it is not. Many warrants are issued in ways other than through a judge or a magistrate. The point relates not to the issue of the warrant but to the circumstances in which the warrant can properly be issued. That is a question of policy and is not a judicial issue.

Mr. Rogers *rose—*

Mr. Hogg: I want to finish this.

A judge who is asked to issue a warrant has to be satisfied that it is in the interests of national security with regard to defence and foreign policy or in the interests of economic well-being. I have appeared before many judges during my life and very few, if any, have either the competence or expertise to deal with such matters of policy. That is not a criticism, but a statement of fact. There would be a submission made to them by officials with responsibility, drawing attention to policy issues. However, those issues are wholly outside the framework of practice and experience of judges.

Checks and balances are provided in the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills may shake his head, but that is the case. For example, the Secretary of State is mightily constrained and the commissioner oversees what happens. Under the amendment, in so far as it bites at all, there is no review, no appeal, no subsequent comment and no right of representation. If one is talking about checks and balances and the preservation of human liberties, one does better under the Bill than under the amendment.

Mr. Rogers: I would happily accept the Minister's admonition that we should withdraw the amendment if I could understand why we should. I still think that our amendments are valid. I hear what he says about amendment No.36 relating only to the prevention and detection of serious crime; it does stipulate that a warrant should be issued

"subject to subsection (3) below",

which relates to serious crime. That is not to say that the whole amendment is invalid.

I could not follow the Minister's general answer at all. He says that the issuing of warrants is not a judicial act. But the general terms and circumstances under which the secret intelligence services can operate are surely encapsulated in clause 1, and we cannot ask the Secretary of State to issue warrants to allow the services to act in quasi-executive way. The whole point of a warrant is to allow intelligence operators to act outside the law in pursuance of the provisions of clause 1.

As warrant issuing is indeed a judicial act, I cannot see why judges, not the Secretary of State, should not be allowed to issue them. The purpose of the amendments is to break the circle. The secret services are tasked by the Joint Intelligence Committee and the Secretary of State, who will then give them a warrant—in the Government's submission—to act outside the law. The services in turn report back to the same machinery of government and there is thus no true accountability.

If a High Court judge is involved in at least this one process, as the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills said, an element of democracy will be introduced to the process. That is why we shall press the amendment to a Division.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 132, Noes 271.

Division No. 223] **[8.51 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Boyes, Roland
Burden, Richard
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge Hl)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Faulds, Andrew
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Bdgn)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
Macdonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Michael, Alun
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Cummings and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Allison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Begg, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Boscor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Egger, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'ter V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and Mr. Robert G. Hughes.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 10

THE INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY COMMITTEE

Amendment proposed: No. 31, in page 7, line 37, leave out from beginning to 'the' in line 38 and insert—

'(a) who shall be drawn both from the members of the House of Commons and from the members of'.—[*Mr. Douglas Hogg.*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): I understand that with this it will be convenient to discuss also Government amendment No. 32.

Dr. Gilbert: I wish merely to draw attention to the fact that we need not have had this amendment and amendment No. 32 on Report. Even before the Bill came to this House,

Ministers' attention was drawn to the folly of requiring that one of the quorum be a Member of the House of Commons or, by implication, of the House of Lords. However, the Government took absolutely no notice. An amendment that we had prepared could have been accepted in Committee. I regret that the Government have taken so long to come to their senses.

I felt that I must draw attention to something that is indicative of the way in which the Government have dealt with the Bill. Of course I welcome the amendments, but they should not have been necessary.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Mandelson: I beg to move amendment No. 22, in page 8, line 1, leave out lines 1 to 13 and insert—

'(5) The Committee shall make an annual report on the discharge of their functions and shall lay a copy before each House of Parliament together with a statement as to whether any matter has been excluded from that copy in pursuance of subsection (6) below.

(6) If it appears to the Committee, after consultation with the Director-General of the Security Service, the Chief of the Intelligence Service or the Director of GCHQ, as appropriate, that the publication of any matter in a report would be prejudicial to national security, the Committee shall exclude that matter from the copy of the report as laid before each House of Parliament but shall send a copy of the full report to the Prime Minister without any matters being excluded.

(7) In the event of disagreement between the Committee and the Director-General of the Security Service, the Chief of the Intelligence Service or the Director of GCHQ, as appropriate, as to the matters which should be excluded for the Committee's report, that dispute shall be resolved by the Prime Minister.

(8) Any matters not in the annual report as a result of subsection (6) above shall instead be included in a report by the Committee to the Prime Minister.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I understand that with this it will be convenient to discuss also the following amendments:

No. 29, in clause 3, page 13, line 17, at end insert—

'(5) The Committee may request the assistance of staff from among such Crown servants (as defined in section 12 of the Official Secrets Act 1989) as the Secretary of State may think fit, or members of the Department of the Clerk of the House of Commons, provided that any person who assists the Committee shall be notified that he is subject to the provisions of subsection 1(1) of the Official Secrets Act 1989.'.

No. 25, in page 13, line 36, at end insert—

'or because the Secretary of State is satisfied that disclosure to the members of the Committee is unlikely to damage national security'.

No. 26, in page 14, line 2, after '4.', insert '-(1)'.

No. 27, in page 14, line 12, at end add—

'5. The Committee shall have all the powers of the House of Commons to obtain papers, information and documents and to compel the attendance of witnesses and to compel them to answer questions.'.

No. 28, in page 14, line 12, at end add—

'(2) No information will be regarded as sensitive—

(a) if that information is already in the public domain or available to all those whose access to it would damage national security; or

(b) unless the Secretary of State is satisfied that disclosure to the members of the Committee is likely to damage national security.'.

Mr. Mandelson: The amendments concern the running of the Intelligence and Security Committee which is created by the Bill.

Amendment No. 22 concerns the method of reporting of the committee, and I wish to return to that and dwell on it at greater length. Amendment No. 29 concerns the committee's staffing. No. 25 provides a tighter definition of the circumstances in which the Secretary of State might direct information to be made available to the committee, and No. 28 clarifies and provides a greater definition of the category of sensitive information which may be supplied to the committee.

I would not have thought that amendments Nos 25, 28 and 29 would be controversial or contentious in view of the previous commitment made by the Minister to lavish sensitive material and highly classified information on the committee. The amendments simply wish to bear out that commitment to lavishness, although they provide a slight test of whether the Minister wishes and intends to be true to his word.

Amendment No. 20, however, involves a slightly more serious test of the Government's true attitude to the important committee which is being established by the Bill, and of the good faith with which the Government are approaching the committee's role and status—a matter to which we attach considerable importance. The effect of the amendment would be to oblige the committee to lay its annual report on the discharge of its functions before Parliament, rather than simply submitting its report directly to the Prime Minister as the Bill provides for at the moment.

Our justification for making the change is threefold. First, we think that it is important to make clear that the authority for the committee's oversight responsibility is derived from Parliament and that that is borne out by its reporting directly back to its parent, which is Parliament. The committee is an important extension of the scrutiny role of Parliament, and not simply an instrument of the executive role of Government. It is the voice of Parliament, not an extension of the Prime Minister's office. That would be made all the clearer by making the committee submit its annual report to Parliament, rather than via the Prime Minister.

Secondly, we think that it is important that everything possible is done to engage the sincere interest of the House of Commons in the important oversight function of the committee. It is important to gain a commitment to the work of the committee from the House of Commons, and the change that we are proposing would have some considerable symbolic value in achieving that.

Thirdly, although we acknowledge that the committee's powers are circumscribed, it is nonetheless important for the committee to exercise some control over the timing of its report, even though the Prime Minister's veto remains in some form over the contents of the report. As presently drafted, the Intelligence and Security Committee does not have the right to publish its own report, let alone any power to determine the timing of the publication of the report. The Opposition think that that is surely wrong.

It certainly looks absurd that a committee of parliamentarians—with all the authority and importance of the role that is being invested in that committee by the Bill—should not even have the power to publish its annual report and to determine the timing of it.

One need only imagine the circumstances in which an annual report is made containing certain matters and references which are politically unattractive to the Prime Minister. They may be uncongenial or unpalatable at the time of elections, whether local elections, by-elections, European elections or even leadership elections.

One can imagine all sorts of elections that the Prime Minister might face in which he did not care to have a potentially controversial report by the committee published. It would be up to him under the terms of the Bill as it is currently drafted to put off and put off the

[Mr. Mandelson]

publication of the committee's report until a time that was more acceptable and satisfactory from his point of view rather than the point of view of the committee or, indeed, the needs of Parliament. In our view, that is wrong.

The amendment deals with an important point of principle. It is the principle of ownership of the committee, which we believe should be located, and seen to be located, clearly among Members of Parliament. The amendment has nothing to do with the separate argument about the powers and status of the committee and its access to information. All those separate matters will be covered by other amendments.

Amendment No. 22 is important because it touches on the image of this important committee. It touches on the committee's standing with the public. It is important that the public see the committee as capable of exercising its oversight powers independently of the Executive. For the committee to make its report to the Prime Minister rather than to Parliament involves negative connotations in the eyes of the public and denotes a lack of independence which is wrong for the presentation of the committee. Such a lack of independence affects the committee's credibility with the public and other Members of Parliament. It also affects its authority vis-a-vis the security and intelligence services.

The committee's standing with the public, credibility with other parliamentarians and authority vis-a-vis the intelligence services are all in doubt. They have yet to be established. They remain fragile. The Minister may argue that the change proposed in the amendment is gratuitous or unnecessary, and has been tabled only to satisfy the over-zealousness or ego of parliamentarians. He would be wrong to make that judgment.

The Minister—perhaps not the Minister personally, but Ministers as a general breed—does not realise the extent to which the jury is still out on the robustness and effectiveness of the committee and its oversight role. Many people have reserved judgment on the committee, and are waiting to see whether it will turn into a tiger or a pawn. Therefore, it is important at this stage to make some symbolic gestures that demonstrate the committee's independence and its link with the oversight and accountability functions of Parliament, rather than tie it so closely to the Prime Minister.

The way in which the committee is perceived and judged inside and outside Parliament is important. It will be greatly affected by amendment No. 22 and other amendments that affect its running, its access to information and its independence. To modify the Bill so that the committee continues to work closely with and alongside the Prime Minister but clearly embodies the principle of answerability to the House would be a powerful symbol. It would considerably strengthen the aims and goals of the Bill to which we subscribe.

It is important for the Joint Intelligence Committee to work closely with the Government and the Prime Minister. We understood that and accommodated it in the amendment. As we have consistently acknowledged, it is important for the operational integrity of the services to be paramount. We readily accept that no one has a greater personal duty to safeguard their operational integrity than the Prime Minister. It is therefore understandable and right for him to be personally involved in the publication of the committee's report. He should do so in the way prescribed in our amendment, however, and not as set out in the Bill.

The agencies should be protected from any unwitting operational disclosure in the committee's report. To that end, our amendment proposes two powerful safeguards to ensure that no unwitting disclosure takes place.

9.15 pm

First, we propose that the JIC should consider its draft in consultation with the agency heads before finalising the report that it makes to Parliament. The agency heads should be given that opportunity to give appropriate advice to the committee on the contents of the report so that we can ensure—certainly, to the committee's satisfaction—that nothing contained in it unwittingly discloses anything or refers to something that would endanger our national security or any operational source available to the intelligence services.

The second safeguard, which is equally important, is that the Prime Minister should conduct any desirable or necessary arbitration between the heads of the agencies and members of the committee. The Prime Minister should resolve any disagreement—although it is unlikely—between agency heads and committee members about a matter that the committee might want to refer to in its report but the agency does not want it to include. The amendment provides for that. Any matter excluded would be reported in camera to the Prime Minister.

When we discussed those matters in Committee, the Minister cast considerable doubt on the safeguards. While doing so, he also recognised the strength and intellectual respectability of our case and was kind enough to acknowledge that we had a powerful argument for the committee reporting directly to Parliament rather than via the Prime Minister.

Whether for his sake, or for that of other people in the Administration—I am not sure for whom he was batting on the issue—he chose to point to some defective drafting. In my experience of the Bill in Standing Committee, and of the Minister, drafting is very much in the eye of the beholder. If one has a mind to do so, it is easy to pick holes and pull threads in almost anything, which is what the Minister did during our discussions of these matters in Committee. He alighted on the criteria that we would use for excising material and matters that it would not be right to include in the final report. The Minister drew a distinction between the drafting of the provisions currently in the Bill and the drafting of the Opposition's amendments. He pointed to what he believed was a preferable formulation and said—I will paraphrase the terms of the Bill—that matters which are prejudicial to the continued discharge of the functions of either of the services should be excised. The Minister thought that this was infinitely preferable to the criterion set out in the Opposition's amendment—that material which is thought to be prejudicial to national security should be excised.

The Minister has drawn that distinction, but there is not a great deal of difference between the provisions of the Bill and the Opposition's amendment. I think that the Minister is indulging in semantics. It is pretty all-encompassing to talk of something being "prejudicial to national security". I would not have thought that anyone would have too much difficulty, after a five-minute discussion, in coming to an agreement on the basis of that broad criterion. Yet the Minister chose to describe the criterion as overly narrow.

I think that his argument was very thin. He was grasping at straws, or any pretext that he could lay his hands on, in attempting to support his argument and oppose the change that we put forward. If he is worried about the protection of intelligence sources—as he seemed to be at the time—I ask him what conceivable point there would be in the Intelligence and Security Committee identifying a source, deliberately or unwittingly.

If it identified a source unwittingly, when it was quickly pointed out to the committee by the head of the agencies or others that there was a risk that an intelligence source might be compromised, it would be almost inconceivable for the committee, despite that advice, to persist in its pursuit of a matter which might compromise in any way either the operational integrity of the service or an important source which is available to the intelligence service.

Dr. Gilbert: My hon. Friend makes an extremely important point. Is it not perfectly clear that, if the committee were so obtuse or perverse as to follow the line that he puts forward as a theoretical possibility, it would very quickly find that it would receive absolutely no information, and that would be the end of the committee?

Mr. Mandelson: My hon. Friend makes an extremely valid point. When a committee of this kind is set up, one invests heavily in the common sense, judgment and trustworthiness of the people appointed to the committee. If one cannot invest in those very important commodities, one would be very ill advised to set up the committee in the first place.

I remind the Minister that it is the Prime Minister who is placing the trust of Parliament and the nation in the people who are selected to serve on the committee. It is the Prime Minister who determines the membership of the committee. If, at the next moment, he starts treating them as children, not only will it be insulting to the people he has appointed to the committee, but it will say a great deal about his judgment in appointing them in the first place.

The amendment aims to strengthen the committee's parliamentary status and respectability without compromising the agencies' operational capability in any way. In doing so, it will ensure that the process of oversight commands greater public confidence. I think it is very important to us all that it be established and strengthened.

Reporting directly to Parliament rather than via the Prime Minister may be a symbolic difference, but it is extremely important to demonstrate that we believe that strengthening ties to Parliament is more important than deepening the Intelligence and Security Committee's subservience to the Prime Minister.

In Committee, the Minister acknowledged that the Opposition were making a respectable, intellectual argument. One senior Government source went further—I do not know whether he was speaking while he was within or outside the ring of secrecy, or whether I was inside or outside of it with him at the time, so I will not identify him. He remarked to me in Committee that this matter was not something on which the Government would go to the wall if people felt that it was important to make a symbolic but no less important gesture in establishing the committee's independence and proper functioning in relation to Parliament.

I say to the Minister that people inside and outside the House do think that this is important. Those of us who care about the credibility and standing of the committee therefore think that it is important. Reporting to Parliament rather than to the Prime Minister, albeit with the Prime Minister's stamp firmly on the committee's report, represents the right balance to strike. I hope that our amendment will be supported, and I commend it to the House.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: I choose to speak to amendments Nos. 27 and 28 and I reject amendment No. 25 on the basis that it is craven, and because my rejection better emphasises that.

The House will remember well that, as recently as five years ago, the idea of such an oversight committee was anathema to the Government. It was thought that the entire national security would fall apart if anyone other than the Secretary of State, or those officially within the circle of secrecy in Government, were to determine security matters. It was absolutely verboten and the very suggestion that there should be any form of committee that could remotely consider the security services was too horrendous to consider. We tried the idea of Privy Councillors being on such a committee and ran routes around the House and so on, but the suggestion was too shocking. I do not think that I am saying anything more than what was, even then, not a secret when I say that the Government were alarmed.

In the course of those five years, the Government have travelled a long way and one should commend them for that. They have travelled that distance because we now have a more liberal Administration and because people have reflected on what they want the Intelligence and Security Committee to do. I understand why my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State does not want to address the history of the 1970s and 1980s, but that history was such that many in the House, and those who had informed discussions outside, were nervous about whether the security services were focused or under control. Concern was expressed about the policy towards the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Cathy Massiter and others and therefore the Government moved to legalise the internal security services and make them subject to a statutory authority. They had previously rejected oversight on the basis that such matters were so intimate to the very nature and survival of everything that Britain stands for that the system would fall apart if it were subject to such oversight.

The purpose of the ISC is to attest to the general public—us, here in the Commons in one sense and the wider public outside—that the internal security services are run ethically and are not directed against honest and honourable citizens. It is designed to prove that the service is not a malign institution. It is a wholly honourable thing for the Government to want to demonstrate that in a wider focus. If they did not want to demonstrate that, why would they bother to have a committee? They could see off those of us who worry and are jittery about the integrity of such services. The majesty of Government could maintain the position that there was no need for anyone to consider the internal security services.

We need, the public needs, a committee in which we can invest trust. We need one that can assure us about the facts that touch upon the very nature of our democracy but not, of course, by detailing and delineating the actual circumstances of cases. The Committee stage of Bills such as this used to be taken on the Floor of the House, so that

[Mr. Richard Shepherd]

any Member who had an interest, or an interest on behalf of his constituents, could speak in more detail to amendments.

The committee is supposed to attest to you and to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this internal security authority is working in accordance with law and appropriately. How can it do that if it is prevented from examining information that gives the entire history, tracing dead cases?

I shall say this because I think that our obsessive secrecy undercuts the authority of Government. How can the committee, with the best will in the world, say, "We think that warrants are proportionate"? The Minister will say, "Oh, that is not the important function of the committee. That will be done by the commissioner or by others." That is not the case, because this will be the only organisation for which we shall understand the character of the people appointed. After all, those people will be appointed from those who have been in our midst over the years. That is the purpose of parliamentary government, after all. We shall be able to form a judgment on the character of those individuals. That is why the parliamentary system is often advanced as a good one. We know the weight and the worthiness of the individuals that are there, so that we can trust them when they attest to us, "I cannot tell you the details, but I assure you that that is proper and ethical."

9.30 pm

That is what the Government want and what the House wants and I suspect that it is what the generality of the public want. Therefore, if one is investing in people whom one knows—the appointment is in the gift of the Prime Minister in the end—one must allow them to consider all that one would expect them to be able to consider, such as papers, information and documents, and to compel the attendance of witnesses if necessary. That would be a much more consensual thing, but the statute should set out firmly, "This committee is entitled to look at everything." That will give us the necessary confidence in it.

The purpose of our security service arrangements—the Bill, in a sense—is to give us all an opportunity to reinforce the most important concept that we slip away from in the House, ministerial accountability. Ministers come from among us. They come from the general election among us. They are meant to be our friends, our instrument by which we govern our society. Of course that is wildly fanciful, but I subscribe to the bonny traditions of our House and it was the old tradition and view. I am a Jeffersonian democrat in those terms. I do not believe in prerogatives and I am glad that the Government have put that on a statutory basis. It was inappropriate before.

The purpose of our system, with the checks and balances and so on, is to reinforce the doctrine. I cannot trace, and I do not think that anyone has ever been able to trace in any of the debates that we have had, where authority lies. Where are the checks and balances? Who is responsible for monitoring, overseeing and attesting that all is well ethically, is properly run and is run in accordance with the law? Where is the officer who carries out the oversight function?

The Foreign Secretary is now engaged almost permanently in a dialogue about Europe, plus the security dimension. He is the Secretary of State, in theory, issuing those warrants, no less, keeping an eye on what those people are doing. He has the commissioner to do it, but his greatest allies are his colleagues from the Parliament of the United Kingdom, who are also considering those matters. I think that it will be a heavy job.

I honour those who will take on the responsibility of being members of that oversight committee because, if they take their tasks seriously, if they are to give authority to that committee, they will have to be individuals whom we trust, whose character we know and can weigh. We must not have old toadies of Government or former Ministers who have been through the routine and have become so grand, vaunted up with privy councillorships on their way to the House of Lords, and who are good and noble bodies who have inflicted much damage on our national life during the ordinary course of their business as ordinary Ministers. No; we want people of spirit. That must be right. This is a land of spirit.

First, that will reinforce accountability. It will help the Minister to do his duty to the House. Secondly, it will give the confidence that was lacking in parts of the 1980s. We have said it before and I think that everyone agrees here. Those are essentially honourable, not covert, services. Those are not shabby little individuals who run around trying to undermine the integrity and authority of our institution. They are honourable public servants who are trying to do, as we try to do, their best for our society.

In the muddle of the Bill, I think that it is a worthy amendment—I take amendment 27 at random. I know that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary is generous in such matters, so perhaps he could assure an even better interpretation of the Bill, ready for the House of Lords, so that it can come back here and we can give it a cheer.

Mr. Winnick: I must tell the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) that, although it is quite likely that he does not wish to serve on the committee, his chances of doing so if he did so wish are probably very remote. If I may hazard a guess, I think that —unfortunately—those nominated from among the Tories will be those whom the Government consider safest, and least likely to cause any trouble.

The amendments deal with the crux of the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) rightly said that, to a large extent, the credibility of the committee is at stake. Those of us who have campaigned for genuine parliamentary scrutiny over the years have always taken the view that at some stage we will succeed: in 1986, I said in a speech that the time would come when the Government of the day accepted the necessity for some scrutiny of the intelligence services. So far, the Government's response has always been that such scrutiny is unnecessary. When the issue has been raised in Adjournment debates and on other occasions, Ministers have always told me that, because of ministerial control, there is no need for concern or for the establishment of any such committee.

I do not think that the Bill gives the impression that there will be genuine parliamentary scrutiny. The committee will report to the Prime Minister; I assume that it will be serviced by the Cabinet Office. The Parliamentary Secretary nods. Such a committee would appear to be virtually a sub-committee of the Cabinet Office, although it would include parliamentarians. That may not be the Government's wish, and it may not happen in practice. However, it would be important because it would not only give the impression of genuine parliamentary scrutiny but to ensure that it takes place.

That is why I think that a Select Committee should be set up, although I accept that the Government are not going to establish one at this stage.

Why not accept the amendments? Why should not the committee report to Parliament rather than to the Prime Minister? It should be the servant of Parliament: is it going to be the servant of the Prime Minister? That is the real issue. What sort of committee are we discussing—a committee that is answerable only to the Prime Minister, as the Bill suggests, or a committee that is answerable to the House of Commons?

As I have said before, if other western democracies are willing to provide for genuine parliamentary scrutiny, why is not the British Parliament—the oldest in the world—prepared to do the same? Why should it be thought that Members of Parliament cannot be trusted? Why should it be felt that we are not in a position to decide on such sensitive matters—which, indeed, has always been the argument against establishing a committee in the first place?

Amendment No. 27 states:

"The Committee shall have . . . powers . . . to obtain papers, information and documents".

That, too, is an important amendment. Will the committee have the authority to obtain those papers, information and documents, so that it can carry out the job for which I hope it is being set up? If the Government continue to take the view that the committee should be denied such powers —I fear that they will—it will inevitably be felt that it is not a genuine committee.

I am not in a position to know the views of those who are directly involved in the security services. They may have no particular view one way or the other, or they may agree with the broad aspects of the Bill. However, there is at least a possibility that some, at any rate, believe that if there is to be parliamentary scrutiny it should go the whole hog—that is not a deliberate pun on the Minister's name! —or, certainly, much of the way. They may believe that a genuine committee should be established, if not a Select Committee. A committee with the powers suggested in the amendments may inspire more confidence in those involved in the security services.

For those reasons, I believe that the Government should be far more flexible and far more willing to accept that Members of Parliament appointed to the committee can do the job. They should not adopt an attitude that suggests —as my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool rightly said—that they are dealing with children. For so many years, the Government refused to accept any form of parliamentary scrutiny, but why stop here? Why not go a little further and establish a committee in which the House can have confidence and whose members realise that they are servants of the House and are not accountable only to the Prime Minister?

Mr. Allason: Amendment No. 27 deals with the committee's right to obtain information and documents and would grant the committee the power to call individual officers to give evidence before it. I have some reservations about the latter provision, but it is immensely important that the committee has the right to call for information and documents. I draw the House's attention to amendment No. 1 which deals with what should happen to any such documents.

A public declassification procedure is long overdue in this country, and I see no reason why we should not have one, especially in view of the American experience, which has been entirely successful. For example, earlier this year, the CIA issued a publication on the Cuban missile crisis. Members of the oversight committee should be allowed to call for documents, even those of an historic nature, to enable them to get the complete background to particular events.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) explained, the British have a curious attitude towards secrecy, which can be encapsulated in the difference between the British and American approaches. The American approach is that, if any document has been generated with taxpayers' money, the taxpayer is entitled to see that document at some stage. If the Government object on grounds of national security, there is a straightforward procedure to follow—an independent judge can be persuaded of the case and he can prevent declassification—but, under any other circumstances, the citizen has the right to see documents after a given period.

It is curious that GCHQ, MI5 and the SIS are exempt from the Public Records Act 1958. None of their documents go to the Public Record Office; that organisational designation alone on the documents' circulation list will be enough to prevent them from going there. The American approach is that the citizen has a right to see documents. It is a tremendous discipline for public servants because they know that there will be disclosure at some stage and that their advice will be revealed. The British approach is that Ministers must be allowed to receive completely independent advice from their civil servants and that the civil servants should never be held to account at the bar of public opinion. I know which of the two options I believe is healthier for democracy, for the public and for confidence in those agencies. There is a dramatic difference between the two.

Amendment No. 1 would allow all documents—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Amendment No. 1 is not included in this group. Indeed, it was not selected at all.

Mr. Allason: I am grateful for it, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am speaking to amendment No. 27, which would allow members of the committee to call for documents. If it were accepted, they would be empowered to call for documents of the type that I have described which, under my amendment, would have gone to the PRO. It would have got the Government off a hook on which they have recently impaled themselves. Fifty years ago, in the run-up to D-day, it would have been possible to release all the relevant documents. They would have shown that, while there is a proper place for commemoration, there is also a great deal to celebrate in the remarkable military achievement of 6 June 1944. I accordingly urge the House to accept amendment No. 27.

Dr. Gilbert: I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) on his extremely eloquent remarks on this group of amendments. I subscribe to everything that he said, especially about the need for the committee's reports to be published properly after they have been scrutinised and accepted by the Prime Minister. I realise that there is nothing in the group of amendments that specifically relates to that idea, but I hope that I shall not stretch your tolerance too far, Dame Janet, if I invite the Minister, when he replies, at least to acknowledge that in

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the normal course of events the country and the House could expect the reports to be published within, say, two months of being submitted to the Prime Minister. I realise that there could be abnormal circumstances—a general election could intervene, for example—but it would be helpful to everybody if the Minister gave an assurance about what would happen in the normal course of events.

9.45 pm

I strongly endorse what my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool said about amendment No.27—about the powers of the oversight committee. We discussed those at some length in Committee, but it is as well to give the whole House the chance to hear the arguments. My recollection is that when we discussed those matters in Committee the only defence that the Minister of State gave for his resistance to the Opposition amendments was that the powers were not needed, because virtually everybody would be awfully happy and would want to come along and give evidence to the committee anyway. If I do the Minister an injustice or traduce him, it is open to him to tell the House now that he has other arguments, but that is the only argument that I can remember him having offered in Committee.

Earlier today the Minister gave us a list of all the areas into which the committee might find itself being drawn: drug smuggling, child pornography, violence and serious crime are apparently all to come within its purview. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman really intend to stand up at the Dispatch Box and say again that he expects everyone whom the committee will want to have as a witness to come willingly? I cannot believe that he will try to advance such a preposterous argument to the House. It is clearly necessary for the committee to have some powers.

It is bad enough that the committee will not have the power to put witnesses on oath and that, unlike witnesses before Select Committees, its witnesses will not be at risk of being in contempt of the House. But witnesses will not even have to come at all. If they feel like it, they will be able to laugh at any invitation from the committee. I cannot see how it can be in the Government's interests to produce a committee with no powers of that sort, so that thoroughly unscrupulous people will be able to mock an invitation to appear before it.

Presumably the Government and the Prime Minister want the committee to be treated seriously, as a body of some status and dignity, but unless it is given some powers I am afraid that not only will the Government's assurances ring hollow but the whole business will not do the Prime Minister's reputation any good.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The debate has focused mainly on amendments Nos. 22 and 27, dealing with the report to Parliament and the powers of the committee, so I shall speak to those two amendments.

The hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) made a powerful case for reporting to Parliament. I understand it, and it is a perfectly respectable case. The question is where the balance of advantage lies. I seek to persuade the House that it lies with the formulation set out in the Bill as drafted at present.

Essentially, I shall make three points. First, the amendments do not achieve any substantial or substantive beneficial effect. Secondly, they are incompatible with the nature of the committee as contemplated within the Bill. Thirdly—these are drafting points, but of some substance—the amendments have within them some undesirable elements.

Do the amendments achieve anything of real substance? Under the Bill, Parliament will receive a full report through the Prime Minister, who will have the power to make excisions—but Parliament will receive a full report. That is the purpose of the hon. Gentleman's amendment. We are debating a difference in the modalities, not in the end result. I understand the argument about enhancing the status of the committee but do not agree with it. The end result—the presentation to Parliament of a report—would happen either way.

Mr. Mandelson: The Minister misses the point. If Parliament receives a report from an independent committee drawn from its own Members, who have exercised a full oversight function, Parliament will attach considerable weight to its contents. If Parliament receives a report from the Prime Minister, that imprimatur will give the report its character and status—which will consequently be lower in the eyes of Parliament and the public.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman reinforces my view that we are discussing modalities rather than strategic objectives. We have the same objective—that Parliament should receive a comprehensive report. We are arguing between ourselves as to whether or not that report goes via the Prime Minister. I do not think that that matter is of enormous principle.

Is it logical to adopt the approach taken in the Bill or that proposed in the amendment? The plain truth is that the committee is sui generis. Its members are appointed by the Prime Minister—it is not a Select Committee—who is responsible to the House for intelligence and security. It is logical that the committee should report to him, for he appointed it and is accountable for the policies in respect of which it exercises oversight for the House. It is more logical to follow our route than that of the hon. Member for Hartlepool.

I want to make a number of drafting points. I do not pretend that they are all overwhelming but their cumulative effect is considerable. The amendment makes no provision for ad hoc reports, and I am sure that we all agree that they are desirable. Also, the amendment provides—at least in the first instance—for the decision as to what should be or can be excised to be discussed between the committee and the agencies. I find it odd that the agencies should have a role in determining what should be excised, bearing in mind the fact that they are overseen by the committee. I am uncomfortable about that mismatch.

The hon. Member for Hartlepool is wrong to reject the Bill's provision for excisions when the material is prejudicial to the workings of the agencies—or words to that effect. The hon. Gentleman wants a test of national security. That is interesting, when one considers the remarks of the right hon. Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert). It would be difficult to say that the disclosure, for example, of the identity of a source would automatically be prejudicial to national security, whereas it almost always would be to the functioning of the agencies. The hon. Member for Hartlepool could have put that right in his amendment but chose not to do so, so he must be judged on his own drafting.

Mr. Mandelson: Surely the Minister accepts that such information would be prejudicial both to national security and to the exercise of the agencies' functions? In that case, it is never likely to come within a mile of appearing in anything so much as an early draft of a report, let alone in the final version.

Mr. Hogg: I do not agree. It might be, but it would not necessarily be so. Take the example of a source that relates to drug trafficking abroad. I do not believe that identifying such a source would, in the generality of cases, be prejudicial to national security but it would almost always be prejudicial to the proper working of the agencies, because they would not obtain any information in future. That distinction is another argument against the hon. Gentleman's amendment.

Mr. Mandelson: Given the terms of the amendment, does the Minister accept that that is precisely the sort of advice that could and would be offered to the committee by the heads of the agencies concerned? They would say, "By including a certain matter in the draft report the committee unwittingly risks revealing the identity of an important source. Could you not do this?" The committee would immediately accept that. That is why the first safeguard appears in the amendment.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. The criterion for excising material in the amendment is that matters are prejudicial to national security. That test cannot be satisfied in the example that I have given, and that is why I gave it.

The right hon. Member for Dudley, East asked about time. I cannot confirm that the period would be two months but I can certainly say that it is something that needs to be done quickly and within a reasonable time. In any event, the committee will be able to embarrass the Prime Minister of the day by stating that it has laid its report before him and is looking forward with anticipation to its presentation to Parliament. I cannot give a guarantee on two months, and I shall not do so.

Dr. Gilbert: The right hon. and learned Gentleman has made an extremely helpful point. Are we to take it that it will not be treated as a breach of confidence if the committee discloses the date on which it submitted a report to the Prime Minister?

Mr. Hogg: I cannot think that that difficulty will arise.

I move on to persons and papers. There is a case to be made but in the end there is a difference between our concepts and those of Opposition Members. In effect, Opposition Members are trying to create a Select Committee. We are against that. They are seeking to cloak the committee that we are establishing with all the powers of a Select Committee. I am against that. I believe that the committee that we have created has been given adequate powers to perform its oversight functions. Opposition Members want to give it an unfettered right to call for persons and papers. In Committee, I described the obligations of the heads of agencies and, for that matter, the officers of the services. We need not go over that ground again. In the generality of cases, the information or the personnel will come before the committee subject to the authority of the head of the agency and the terms of schedule 3.

Mr. Mandelson: I wish to clarify what the Minister has just said. He said that the right to call people to the committee will extend to the heads of the agencies and to personnel working within the agencies. Will it extend also to personnel and officials working elsewhere in the Government machine?

Mr. Hogg: I can conceive of many or some circumstances in which the committee would wish to see persons working within Government Departments outside the agencies. There are restrictions that will necessarily apply. The consent of the Secretary of State will be necessary. The Secretary of State, or perhaps the permanent secretary in each Department, would have to give consent. That is inevitable. Indeed, that applies to Select Committees. There are also the restrictions that are set out in schedule 3 concerning sensitive information and the like. I would expect those criteria also to be respected.

Mr. Mandelson: Answer the question.

Mr. Hogg: I am trying to do so.

Subject to the consent of the Minister, who would have to justify his refusal to the House, and subject to a proper respecting of the protections provided in schedule 3, there may be circumstances—I admit that I am using weasel words but I am trying to be careful—in which officials from other Departments would come before the committee. In other words, it could happen but it will not always happen.

Mr. Rogers: Is the Minister saying that the Government or a Government will allow information to come forward if something is potentially embarrassing to them politically but does not impinge upon national security? History proves that, if information is likely to prove embarrassing for a Government, they will not allow it to come through.

Mr. Hogg: I think that I have answered the question fully. If there is a request by the committee to see officials and that request is declined, Ministers may have to explain why they have declined the request. The House of Commons is increasingly intrusive in those matters—and a jolly good thing too.

One should remember that the Bill and other legislation provides for restrictions on the information that can be made available to the committee. It is foolish to pretend otherwise. The problem with the persons and papers powers in the amendments—particularly amendment No. 22—is that they do not respect those restrictions or other statutory restrictions.

Mr. Winnick: If the committee decides, as it may do in certain circumstances, that it wants a particular witness to come before it, who could be from outside the Government service and that that witness is essential—

It being Ten o'clock, further consideration of the Bill stood adjourned.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business),

That, at this day's sitting, the Intelligence Services Bill [*Lords*] may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Question agreed to.

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

Mr. Winnick: If a witness refuses to accept a summons to appear before a Select Committee, it can come to the House for authority to summon him. Will the Minister give

[Mr. Winnick]

a pledge that the proposed committee will be able to ask for such authority and that the Government will give that support?

Mr. Hogg: No, I cannot give that pledge and the issue does not arise. The hon. Gentleman is referring to the power of a Select Committee conferred on it by the authority of the House. The Standing Orders of the House contain no provision to give such a power to the proposed committee, which is not a Select Committee, and there is no such provision in the Bill.

I suspect that, in most cases, people who are outside the Government machine and who have information will wish to give that information and will, therefore, come before the committee. In reply to the question whether the committee has the power to compel that, the answer is no.

Dr. Gilbert: Nothing in the Bill says that the committee may not make the request. The committee may not get very far, so the Minister cannot rely on that. I should be interested to hear his answer to this point. He said that the power is not contained in the Bill. That is what is wrong with the Bill and that is what we are complaining about. We are still waiting to hear the reason. My hon. Friends and I would be amenable to hearing any reason from him other than that most people will come anyway. Why does he think that Select Committees need the power, whereas this committee does not?

Mr. Hogg: I have given the reason why I do not think that the committee requires the power, although the right hon. Gentleman may not agree with it. It is not a Select Committee of the House. We need to be chary about the powers that the House gives to committees that are not Select Committees. The Bill provides—and I think that the House accepts this—that there need to be restrictions on the classes of information that the committee is entitled to require to be delivered to it. That goes for information and for papers. A range of statutes, including the Official Secrets Act 1911, bite on people's ability to give evidence or provide information. The amendment's provisions on persons and papers, and the concept behind it, take no account of restrictions in the Bill and no account of the Official Secrets Act. It is objectionable for that reason.

Mr. Rogers: The answer that the Minister gave my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert) is not good enough. As my right hon. Friend said, the Minister has not given a substantial reason for refusing the amendment. For that reason, we shall press it to a vote.

Dr. Gilbert: Is it not perfectly clear that the Minister has told the House that the committee is not going to be a Select Committee? We all know that, and we do not need him to tell us it again. He has also said that the House should be chary of giving such powers to an outside committee, which I accept.

Will my hon. Friend try to extract from the Minister his view of the difference between the functions of this committee and the functions of a Select Committee? It seems to me that the committee will perform virtually all the functions of a Select Committee—except that it will not have the same powers. It will certainly do Select Committee work.

Mr. Rogers: As my right hon. Friend knows, during the Committee stage of the Bill it was impossible, I am afraid, to extract any reasonable answers from the Minister. I do not suppose that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is about to reform this evening. I am quite prepared to allow him to intervene if he wants to volunteer, but I doubt whether he will. Meanwhile we shall press the amendment to a vote.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 88, Noes 267.

Division No. 224] **[10.05 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Barnes, Harry
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fyfe, Maria
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gunnell, John
Hanson, David
Harvey, Nick
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Ellyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
Mackinlay, Andrew
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Michael, Alun
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spearing, Nigel
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Warsing, Robert N
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Gordon McMaster.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rt Hon Michael *(Saby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*

Browning, Mrs. Angela
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Curtis, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dewe, Nbl Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Egger, Tim
Ellerton, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'ford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mandelson, Peter
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Salmesbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shephard, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'ter V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bas'ph'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

Question accordingly negatived.

Schedule 1

Investigation of Complaints

10.15 pm

Mr. Rogers: I beg to move amendment No. 23, in page 10, line 20, after 'State', insert—

'7A. The Tribunal shall submit details of every determination made by it, its reasons for the determination and the relevant background papers to the Intelligence and Security Committee.'.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I understand that with this it will be convenient to discuss amendment No. 24, in page 11, line 4, at end insert—

'. Where it is possible for the Tribunal to give reasons for its determination to the complainant without damaging national security it shall do so.'.

Mr. Rogers: The amendments relate to the tribunal and the oversight committee. *[Interruption.]* It is very difficult to hear oneself speak because of all of the noise from the Government Front Bench and the racket from the Back Benches.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not think that the conversation is confined to the Front Benches. The hon. Gentleman's point is well taken.

Mr. Rogers: I am glad that some Government Members have been able to have an enjoyable evening; they look all the better for it.

The reason for the amendments is to enable the Committee, as we have described in the last group of amendments in relation to clause 10, to consider the

[Mr. Rogers]

workings of the two services. For it to do so, it must know what complaints have been made and how they have been dealt with by the tribunal.

The vast majority of complaints to the current security service tribunal appear to be unjustified. Indeed, since the commission was set up and the tribunals have been in operation, the number of complaints is in the low 40s. None of those has been accepted by the commissioner, even for investigation, without being related to the tribunal in any way.

Therefore, it is important that the tribunal reports to the oversight committee to see whether any complaints are justified. Of course, that information will be helpful for the committee to carry out its work, and the committee would also need the power to call for information from the tribunal. During the debate on the previous group of amendments, we talked about the power of the committee to compel witnesses to appear before it and order people to provide information for it. The Government would not accept that. Within the closed circle of secrecy that the Government are creating, surely there is no harm or difficulty in the tribunal reporting to the scrutiny committee. It is within the circle of secrecy that the Minister is so anxious to maintain and would not affect national security in any way.

Amendment No. 24 is extremely important. It deals with whether the tribunal should give reasons for its determination to complainants so long as national security is not involved. The amendment seeks to give the complainant greater rights to natural justice. The tribunal would have to give some details to the complainant.

The procedure envisaged in the Bill is completely secretive. Everything is done by post. There is no hearing. Once complainants have made a complaint, they receive a letter saying that the case is being investigated. A few months later they receive another letter saying that no determination has been made in their favour. That is the pattern that has prevailed under the Security Service Act 1989. No information is given about what has happened in the intervening period, who has been investigated and who has been interviewed. The complainant has no access to any information, even if the disclosure of the information would not affect national security.

Without access to any of the results of the tribunal's investigation, the complainant is in an impossible position and cannot argue his or her case properly. Therefore, the so-called remedy is of little value. In some cases, it will not be possible to reveal any information, but in many cases it will be possible. As we have said, we support most of the provisions of the Bill because we believe that we have to have a secret intelligence service and it has to be allowed to carry out its job properly. However, the procedures laid down in the Bill do not comply with safeguards contained in article 6 of the European convention on human rights.

In addition to the failure to provide any information on the allegations that may have justified surveillance, as we have seen the tribunal can determine only whether the service had reasonable grounds for its actions. It cannot consider the correctness of the service's decision that any particular action or surveillance was justified.

Since the 1989 Act set up the tribunal for the security service, no complaint has ever been upheld by the tribunal. That shows that the model for what is envisaged in the Bill not only has an imperfect record but does little to further the interests of natural justice. We believe that the amendments are extremely important in the general structure of the Bill. Therefore, we shall press them to a vote.

Mr. David Davis: May I begin by correcting something that I am sure the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) did not intend to put on the record. He said that of the 40 complaints none was investigated. I think that he meant that there were no determinations in favour of the complainants. All the complaints were investigated. As I said in Committee, although the commissioner has the right not to investigate if he judges a complaint to be vexatious, he has investigated every complaint put to him.

I cannot commend the amendments to the House. Both have been discussed previously in another place and in Committee. As I explained in Committee, amendment No. 23 would increase the access of the oversight committee to information and by so doing would risk confusing and overlapping its functions with those of the tribunal.

The legislation is framed in a way which ensures that there is a proper, independent and effective form of redress for complainants. That is what is important and what the tribunal is for. The oversight committee's remit is to examine the administration, policy and expenditure of the agencies. The Bill provides that they shall have access to the information that they require to fulfil that remit, subject to the provisions of schedule 3. The committee has no role in investigating complaints, nor is it its role to oversee the work of the tribunal.

The investigation of complaints naturally involves detailed consideration of precise operational information. That may include information listed in paragraph 4 of schedule 3 which is defined as sensitive. For that reason, we are not prepared to accept that the tribunal should automatically give details of all its cases to the oversight committee.

At first sight, amendment No. 24 attracts some sympathy. It requires the tribunal to give reasons to a complainant for its determination, if it can do so without endangering national security. The amendment has an attraction, since I appreciate that complainants may feel aggrieved when they receive no explanation for the tribunal's decision on their case, whether their complaint is upheld or not.

Before I explain why we have a problem with the amendment, the House should remember that many organisations throughout the world—and closer to home—are keen to learn about security and intelligence apparatus and techniques in this country. That is self-evident. Many of those organisations are extremely sophisticated and have considerable resources. They are capable of monitoring all sorts of information and much can be inferred from what is not, as well as what is, made public when collating intelligence information.

As the Government have often said, they remain absolutely committed to ensuring the continued security of the agencies' operations. Without that security the work of the agencies would be ineffective. For that reason, it is vital that information about the operations and procedures of the agencies is not inadvertently divulged in any circumstances.

Security would obviously be jeopardised if complainants who were properly the subject of investigation were made aware of that fact. If, on the other hand, the

practice of informing only those complainants against whom no action had been taken were introduced, it could clearly be inferred that complainants who were not so informed had been the subject of action by an agency. Security would therefore be jeopardised.

Accordingly, in the Government's view, almost any practice of disclosure to a complainant would in the long term damage national security. That would make the amendment ineffective, if not arguably dangerous, and for that reason I cannot commend it to the House.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 87, Noes 258.

Division No. 225] **[10.30 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anna *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fyfe, Maria
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gunnell, John
Hanson, David
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lewis, Terry
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
Mackinlay, Andrew
McWilliam, John
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Michael, Alun
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Morley, Elliot
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, Michael *(N Wiltshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Sheerman, Barry
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wicks, Malcolm
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Gordon McMaster.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Egger, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'ham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim

Richards, Rod
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Salmsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'ter V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bas'ph'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Derek Conway.

Question accordingly negatived.

Schedule 3

THE INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY COMMITTEE

Amendment made: No. 32, in page 13, line 15, leave out from 'three' to end of line 17.—[*Mr. Douglas Hogg.*]

Order for Third Reading read.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

10.38 pm

Mr. Winnick: I wish that I could be more enthusiastic about the Bill, especially in view of the long campaign to ensure that the security services are subject to parliamentary scrutiny.

I wish that I were in a position tonight in which I could say that the campaign had succeeded, and that the oversight that is necessary to ensure that the security services act in the way in which they should act had been accomplished, but I am afraid that I am not in that position. Therefore, like my hon. Friends, I am somewhat critical of the measure. I am not enthusiastic.

It is regrettable that the Government, having gone down the road of parliamentary scrutiny of a type, have stopped far short of what they should be doing. I should like to be able to say that the long campaign had come to a victorious conclusion. I should like to be able to say that the House could now be satisfied that it was establishing genuine parliamentary scrutiny along the lines of other western democracies. Unfortunately, I am not in that position.

I say this to the Minister. This would have been the opportunity to end the controversy. This would have been the opportunity to say that the battle had been won. The parties should agree to an oversight committee and there is no reason why it should continue to be the subject of controversy.

I do not believe that we do the services—the intelligence services, MI5, MI6 and Government communications headquarters, Cheltenham—any favours by creating a situation in which the controversy will continue. I agree that the controversy will continue in a more limited form, but it will continue. It will continue because we have not ensured the necessary type of parliamentary scrutiny.

It is unfortunate that the proposed oversight committee will report not directly to the House but to the Prime Minister and hence there will be a feeling that the committee is more similar to a Cabinet subcommittee than it should be. I regret even more deeply the fact that the proposed committee will not have powers and papers which it should have.

I challenged the Minister earlier about what would happen if a witness who had been summoned to the committee decided that he or she did not want to appear. I asked whether, in those circumstances, the Government would be in favour of ensuring that the person concerned was forced to go to the committee as to a Select Committee. The Minister of State at the Foreign Office said that the Government would be willing to do nothing of the kind.

It is unfortunate indeed that the oversight committee does not yet have the powers and authority that the House should give such a committee. I do not know who will serve on the committee, but I hope that, in spite of the limitations that I have outlined and in spite of the criticisms that were made by the Labour party in Committee and on the Floor of the House, the committee, once it is set up, will regard its job as that of a genuine oversight committee.

One of the reasons that I, and I am sure most of my hon. Friends, will not vote against the Third Reading is that we believe that the measure goes at least some of the way towards what we want to do. If we were of the view that it was entirely a mockery, for such a committee would serve no purpose, obviously we would vote against Third Reading, as we would have done against Second Reading, but that is not our view. I accept, as I said a few moments ago, that it goes down the type of road that we want to travel, but how much better it would have been if it had gone down the road of other western democracies.

How much better it would be if we could say, apart from anything else tonight, that the campaign has now ended. It will not end. From time to time, hon. Members such as I will no doubt make the arguments that we have made before.

Nevertheless, I wish the proposed committee every success. I hope that it will carry out the type of functions that it should carry out. I have never disputed that we need the security and intelligence services, and would need them even if we were not confronted by the curse of continuing terrorism. I know of no country—no democracy—that does not have some type of intelligence and security services and I cannot anticipate any circumstances in the future in which the facilities of such a service will not be necessary. A democracy has a right to defend itself.

My criticism of the security services has been largely connected with the scandals and abuses that have occurred. I have never questioned the need for such services, and, as I have said, I see no reason for us to work on the assumption that such assistance to the democracy in which

we live will not continue. Nevertheless, the intelligence and security services should be subject to parliamentary scrutiny in the same way as other arms and agencies of Government. The need for such scrutiny explains why parliamentary control was introduced, why Select Committees were set up in 1979 and why some other Committees existed before them.

If we could assume that the committee would do the job that I consider necessary, we should be far happier tonight. Notwithstanding all those criticisms, I believe that we should give the committee an opportunity to work, and to see how far it goes in its work; but I am certain that the matter will return to the House at some future date. I am convinced, as I was before, not only that there should be parliamentary oversight but that a Select Committee should be established—and one of these days such a committee will come into being, along the lines that we advocate.

10.45 pm

Mr. Allason: The Bill puts on a statutory footing an agency that has existed since 1909, and establishes a commissioner and a tribunal to hear complaints from the public. It is not a consequence of an investigation conducted by Otis Pike or Frank Church—the kind of investigation that was undertaken in the United States; there has never been any sabotage of a Greenpeace vessel like Rainbow Warrior. The only scandals to have preoccupied the SIS, MI5 and GCHQ in recent years have been the unauthorised disclosures made by retired security and intelligence personnel. More than £1 million of taxpayers' money was wasted in the fruitless, counter-productive pursuit of Peter Wright, thereby ensuring that "Spycatcher" became an international best-seller.

Wright was resident abroad, and had acquired Australian citizenship. Accordingly, the public watched the unedifying spectacle of an Australian judge, in an Australian court, with an Australian defendant, deciding what was or was not in the British national interest. GCHQ avoided a similar fiasco by taking out an injunction against a former radio officer, Jock Kane; as a retiree—a pensioner now working as a milkman in Hampshire—he has been unable to produce his memoirs, but no doubt he will be one of the complainants before the tribunal and the commissioner.

As for the SIS, it is in a curious position following the enactment of the Official Secrets Act in 1989. Two books have driven a coach and horses through the Act. Desmond Bristow was engaged in an acrimonious correspondence with the Treasury solicitor; he is resident in Spain and his publishers are American, so he held a strong hand when he ignored the threats and released "A Game of Moles" last year. Similarly, Brian Crozier received a series of threats from the Cabinet Secretary regarding his book "Free Agent".

The bottom line is that both books, written by retired SIS officers, were perceived by their former employers to be prejudicial to national security: that is quite clear from the exchanges between the various parties. However, absolutely no action of any kind has been taken against them—or, indeed, against the late Nicholas Elliott, who told me shortly before his tragic death some 10 days ago that he he had applied for and received permission to publish a third volume of his memoirs. The first did not mention his lengthy career in the SIS; the second was a delightful account of his clandestine life. Alas, the third will never be published; but it is certain that other such books will follow. With compulsory redundancies being imposed on the SIS for the first time in the 85 years of its history, perhaps we should anticipate that disenchanted early retirees will capitalise on their experiences.

The current arrangement for dealing with the authorisation of the memoirs of security and intelligence personnel is manifestly unsatisfactory. It is conducted on the basis of nods, winks and threats that amount to impotent bluff. If there is a single issue that affects the operational capacity of all three agencies covered by the Bill, it is disclosure of the kind that I have described.

Although I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on his handling of the Bill, I hope that the commission and the tribunal will be allowed to interpret their briefs sufficiently widely to avoid more lapses of the type that brought the security services so unfairly and unnecessarily into disrepute.

10.50 pm

Mr. Mullin: The security services have been brought into disrepute over the years because of their own actions, which they no doubt thought would never see the light of day. However, many of those actions did see the light of day, partly due to the disclosures to which the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) has referred.

My problem with what has happened in the past—I do not suggest that it is still happening, although I suppose that we shall have to wait a few years to find out—is more fundamental than that expressed by the hon. Member for Torbay. It is a matter of record that, in the past, the security services have to a great extent been targeted against the party which, for 17 of the past 45 years, has formed the Government and that they have on occasion been used to subvert the elected Government.

I do not know whether it is still the case but, at least until fairly recently, the security services were permanently under the control of the friends of one political party. That was certainly the experience of previous Labour Governments. In another place, Lord Jenkins referred to the "in-growing monoculture" of the security services which he found when he was, nominally at least, in charge of them. Unhappily, it has also been the case that the security services have been targeted by their political masters against people involved in legitimate activities —that was the reason why Cathy Massiter resigned.

I suppose that it could be said that the services have for many years been out of everyone's control, and certainly out of Parliament's control. Indeed, until the Bill came before the House, no one had ever suggested that Parliament should have any say in the matter. I believe that they have been out of the control of all Secretaries of State and most Prime Ministers of either party.

There is a wider problem. It is also a matter of record that the security services have been paralysed by internal feuding. People who care about national security—many, especially Conservative Members, say that they do—should at least be concerned about the extent to which the operational capability of the security services has been entirely diverted by such feuding. Many Conservatives also claim to be concerned about getting value for money, so they should be concerned about the fact that millions of

[Mr. Mullin]

pounds have been wasted by being invested in enterprises that were not effective even within the terms of reference that the security services set themselves.

A further problem was outlined by Robin Robison, a chap who worked in the Cabinet Office until a couple years of ago. He said that domestic telephone tapping had increased massively in recent years. I have no way of confirming his suggestion, although the issue was raised in Committee, that, although GCHQ was supposed to target foreign communications, its vast facilities have been used for domestic tapping. He worked in the Cabinet Office and says that he saw the product of some of those taps.

The litmus test of the new committee to be established by the Bill will be the extent to which it is able to oblige the security services to put a stop to the nonsense that has occurred in the past. The problem will not arise immediately because it is in the nature of things that, whichever Government happen to be in office, the security services tend to be under the control of the friends of one political party—the party which is presently in government. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"] The test would come after the next election, were there to be a change of Government. Would a Labour Government be able to receive the same loyal service from the security services as the present Government believe that they receive? I do not think so. The record suggests that that would not happen. At that point, we would find out whether the committee established by the Bill makes any difference.

I shall cite an example from the 1970s. If forged documents about Swiss bank accounts in the name of, say, the deputy leader of the Labour party suddenly appeared on the market, as happened in the 1970s, would the committee be able to pursue an inquiry and follow the trail wherever it led? I do not know, but it should be able to do so.

How easily could the committee be nobbled? Others have commented on that problem, so I shall do so only in passing, but that will be easy. As others have remarked, the Bill gives the security services carte blanche. There is no definition of the national interest, of serious crime or of economic well-being; there is no definition that limits their activities in any way. As the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) said, there is no definition of what constitutes legitimate dissent.

The second problem with the committee is that, as others have also said, it is a creature not of Parliament but of the Government. It will be appointed by the Prime Minister and will report to the Prime Minister, and it will be the Prime Minister who decides what it sees.

Thirdly, the committee has no powers to compel persons and papers to come before it. In Committee we moved amendments to introduce such powers, and they were rejected. There is no power comparable with Select Committees' reserve powers to require witnesses to give evidence on oath. My right hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert) rightly made much of that issue in Committee, but when the idea was put to the Government they rejected it.

The committee will be staffed not by servants of the House but by civil servants, probably supplied by the Cabinet Office. To a great extent it will be in the hands of people who are servants not of Parliament but of the Government. Furthermore, it appears to be committed to the obsessive secrecy that has surrounded the activities of the security services for so long. The committee has no power that I can detect to hold any public sessions. I do not see why it should not hold some. As a member of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, I was one of the people invited to lunch with the director of MI5, Mrs. Rimington. Nothing took place at that lunch that could not easily have been said in public.

I do not see why, now or at some time in the future, the committee should not have the power to interview those in charge of the security services, at least about the general principles of their work. I do not see why it should not be able to do what is done in other mature democracies, and interview candidates for the top jobs in those services. Why should they not be interviewed, so that their commitment to parliamentary democracy can be tested in public?

For example, if Mr. Spedding, who has just been appointed as head of MI6, were to come before the committee, one would want to know what he was doing in Chile in 1973. That was a time when the democratically elected Government of that country were overthrown, with much violence. It would be a test of Mr. Spedding's commitment to parliamentary democracy if we asked whether he, representing the security services there, played any part in that process.

If Mrs. Rimington were up for the job of head of MI5, as she was a few years ago, and we had the power to conduct such interviews, one would want to talk to her in general terms about her commitment to parliamentary democracy, especially in relation to some of the activities in which F branch of MI5 engaged during the early 1980s —the activities that caused Cathy Massiter to resign.

The only concession that we succeeded in extracting from the Government in Committee was an increase in the size of the oversight committee. Although we are grateful for that, it is not adequate. My hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) made the point that it is much in the interests of the security services that the exercise is credible. I am sure that there are genuine democrats in the security services and that many of them —perhaps the majority—want the services to be properly accountable. In the last few years, there has been a large clear-out of what one former Home Secretary described to me as dead wood, and it is at least arguable that the majority of those in the services are firmly committed to parliamentary democracy and proper accountability, and the Bill does not provide that.

The Bill is the first step on a long road—which is why, in common with my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North, I shall not vote against its Third Reading. I am glad that the committee is being established, and were a future Government so minded, there would be nothing to prevent them from making amendments to rectify some of the problems that I and others outlined.

There has been much speculation about likely candidates for membership of the oversight committee. Some of them were depressingly predictable, and I hope that the committee will include one or two inquiring minds. As the committee is presently empowered, it will not be good enough merely to have inquiring minds. It must have the power to do the job properly—on behalf of Parliament, not the Executive.

11.1 pm

Dr. Gilbert: I do not usually detain the House at this time of night, and I rise to speak only because I am filled with a great sense of disappointment over missed possibilities. Right hon. and hon. Members who did not serve on the Standing Committee ought to know that we were faced by a Minister who was not only extraordinarily unbriefed but extraordinarily obdurate.

Normally, it would not matter if a Minister were unbriefed, provided that he had some experience of committee matters. Apart from the GCHQ debate, not one of the amendments with which the two Ministers had to contend had any partisan flavour, yet the Minister of State did not know the powers of Select Committees. He had to go away and be instructed that they have powers to swear witnesses. He did not know the powers in his own Bill with respect to the committee that he was establishing. He had to take advice as to whether it would be able to swear witnesses.

We even had the spectacle of a Queen's counsel, a man of considerable intelligence—to which I pay tribute—and a man who, given the disarray of the Government's Law Officers, has a distinct future as a Law Officer, although that is no great compliment to him, choosing to say that, for all practical purposes, the country no longer needs a law of perjury. It defeats me why the right hon. and learned Gentleman thinks that the law of the land should be as it is in that respect.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman kept telling us that the oversight committee was not a Select Committee, which we all knew, but he never said why. Amendment No. 37, which was understandably not selected, and my hon. Friends pointed out that it is really a prime ministerial committee. In addition, the Minister is totally lacking in ability to master simple arithmetic up to a sum of five. He finds it necessary for the oversight committee's chairman to have two votes—one to create a tie and one to break a tie. That is not the case in a Select Committee, but as the committee is not a Select Committee it shall be different. If we have a five to three to one committee—we must assume that the Minister sensibly relies on there being partisan votes—that is virtually a five to four committee and the chairman will not need two votes because he will have a vote to break a tie. If there is a defection from the Government ranks, it becomes not a five to three to one or a five to four committee but a four to five committee. In that event, the chairman's second vote is of no use to him because he will not be able to use it.

The Minister may have mastered the law but it is clear that he has not mastered the most simple addition tables. He had not appreciated before the Bill came before the House that it was nonsensical to require that one member of the quorum be a Member of the House of Lords, even though the practical absurdities of that requirement were pointed out to him personally before the Bill reached the Floor of the House. We had to wait until today before he conceded that point.

Why should such an intelligent Minister behave in such a way? The word is being put about that it is nothing to do with his Department and nothing to do with the Foreign Office, which was prepared to be reasonable. It is said that the Home Office created the difficulties. If that should be the case, my only hope is that some Home Office officials come before a Select Committee before too long.

The Bill is the product of Ministers who individually have no Committee experience to speak of. The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science was kind enough to admit that. Equally, his ministerial colleague has no Committee experience. The Bill is the product of a Government who are terrified of facing a Select Committee.

For all these reasons a great opportunity has been missed. That is a sad thing to have to say. It could all have been so much easier. We could have completed today's proceedings in a fraction of the time that it has taken to reach this stage. However, I welcome the Bill, despite my reservations—*[Interruption.]* There is not the slightest inconsistency. I welcome the Bill because it sets a precedent.

Mr. Allason: Give him a job.

Dr. Gilbert: The hon. Gentleman would be surprised by what happened if the Government did that.

As I have said, the Bill sets a precedent for some parliamentary scrutiny of these operations. I hope that the committee will have success. I hope also that my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), who will respond on behalf of the Opposition, will assure us that one of the first tasks of a Labour Administration will be to ensure that the committee is converted into a full-blown Select Committee.

11.7 pm

Mr. Rogers: Our consideration of the Bill in Committee was extremely interesting. For many of us—those not obsessed with the secret and security services—it was quite a learning experience. I thank all my hon. Friends who served on the Committee and Conservative Members for the positive way in which they approached our debates.

I do not know whether I agree with the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert) about the Minister of State. On occasions, I thought that the right hon. and learned Gentleman was too well briefed. I wish that he had been a little briefer in expounding some of his briefs. It was an experience, however, for many of us to learn about some fundamental matters that are extremely important to society.

We are talking about the security of the nation, the balance of security in the process of law, the balance of security and the rights of individuals, the assertion of parliamentary democracy and accountability and control over the state and the Government. On many occasions it was right to pay tribute to members of the security services for the dedicated work that they have undertaken over many years. It was right also to say on other occasions that there were members of the security services who had let down their comrades as well as letting down the nation by defecting and acting to the detriment of society.

The Opposition recognise that the effectiveness of the country's security and intelligence services depends on a degree of secrecy that would be unacceptable in other institutions. However, that latitude puts the services in a unique position. That is why we tabled amendments to clause 1 and clause 10 in particular so as to focus on the rights and privileges of the security services and on the accountability of those services to Parliament and to democracy.

[Mr. Rogers]

Our main concern has always been the control aspect—the process of accountability that is enshrined within the Bill. We regret the Government's minimalist approach. It does not fulfil the Bill's original intention, which was to create a more open society and more open government. I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, East that the Government have missed an opportunity to bring about an openness in an aspect of society that has been secret for too long. We are probably the most secretive society of all the western democracies.

Unfortunately, clause 10, which sets up the Intelligence and Security Committee, does not also set up a process of accountability. There is no breaking of the ring of secrecy. There is no way of operating outside the ring of the Secretary of State and the Joint Intelligence Committee tasking the security services, of the Secretary of State issuing a warrant so that they can operate outside the law where they feel that that is necessary, of the services reporting back to the Secretary of State, the Secretary of State filtering information before it comes to the Intelligence and Security Committee and the Prime Minister and the head of the agencies using their right to sideline information. The circle is too tight and too complete.

The committee will be a charade, a pretence at accountability. The Minister responsible for open government may shake his head, but the proof is in the pudding. I hope that the committee has a better record than the tribunal that was set up under the Security Service Act 1989. That tribunal has been what I feel this committee will be—a pretence at accountability.

We will not force a Division because the Opposition accept that we need secret services, and that they need to be secret. We commend the Government for going as far as they have, but we wish that they had taken this opportunity to go a little bit further, accepted many of our constructive amendments and ended up with a better Act.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 216, Noes 10.

Division No. 226] **[11.13**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dewa, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Ellieson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddell, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Salmesbury, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bas'yn'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John

Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(MacclesfId)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Derek Conway.

NOES

Barnes, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Hood, Jimmy
Lewis, Terry
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Mahon, Alice
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Dennis Skinner and
Mr. Alan Simpson.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

Baby Milk (EC Directive)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

11.25 pm

Mr. David Faber (Westbury): I am most grateful for the opportunity to raise concerns about the Government's draft regulations implementing the EC directive on infant formula and follow-on formula—commonly known to most of us as baby milk. I hope that, in doing so, hon. Members will forgive me for not giving way, but I have some ground to cover in the time available.

I would particularly like to acknowledge my constituent, Cow and Gate Nutricia of Trowbridge—one of Europe's leading companies in infant feeding products and clinical nutrition, and a household name to millions of mothers over many years—for bringing the matter to my attention.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Nicholas Soames): Hear, hear.

Mr. Faber: I am delighted to hear my hon. Friend say that. I have no doubt that, while we may have differing physiques, he—like me—was a Cow and Gate baby at one stage.

The EC directive on infant formula and follow-on formula contains much that should be welcomed by mothers and by the baby milk industry alike. The majority of the rules on marketing contained within it are already enshrined in a voluntary UK code of practice, which was agreed as long ago as 1983 between the Government, the industry and health care professionals.

That voluntary code of practice and the entire debate surrounding the advertising and marketing of baby milk starts with one basic presumption—that breast is best. Mothers should be, and are, encouraged to breast-feed babies so long as it is physically and practically possible for them to do so.

However, in the real world, we all know that that is not always the case. For that reason, I believe that the draft UK regulations enforcing the EC directive go much too far. The code of practice was introduced with Government backing in 1983, since when it has been supported by a code monitoring committee of which the majority of members are completely independent of infant formula companies. The code bans advertising to the general public, except under the control of the health care system, and controls advertising to health professionals themselves.

The committee considers complaints against the code, which are rarely numerous and are often from pressure groups. Few of the complaints are upheld. Since the adoption of the code, baby milk manufacturers themselves have taken further steps to control their marketing by banning the free supply of infant formula and subsidised supplies to the health service from 1989 onwards. Much of what is contained in the EC directive merely goes to formalise what has been to date an informal voluntary code of practice.

It is particularly sad, therefore, that the draft UK regulations to implement this directive which come into force in June go beyond what is either necessary or desirable, and my concern is shared almost across the

[Mr. Faber]

board by the baby milk industry, health care professionals and, most importantly, by the consumers—that is to say, the mothers themselves.

In seeking to ban advertising both to mothers themselves in health journals and to the wholesale and retail trade, the draft regulations are an affront to free trade, anti-competitive and, above all, a denial of a mother's right to free choice and free information. The bottom line is that mothers need information to allow them to make informed choices about how to feed their infants.

Within the current UK code of practice, it is possible for manufacturers to advertise their formula brands to mothers, provided that such advertisements appear in specialist maternity and mothercraft publications which are already distributed within the health care system. Parents can obtain information about infant feeding from a number of different sources—health professionals, the Government, specialist organisations and, of course, the manufacturers of baby milk themselves.

All those sources of information have an important role to play in providing suitable information to ensure an informed choice. Since the voluntary code was introduced in 1983, the Government have spent roughly £26,500 a year to promote breast-feeding through the national breast-feeding initiative. That total sum translates into a yearly figure of 33p per baby.

In contrast, baby milk manufacturers currently provide a service to health professionals and mothers by providing information about infant feeding, including both breast and bottle-feeding. They do so through leaflets, sponsorship, the training of health professionals, advertising, videos and customer health lines. It is said that the majority of the services they offer are currently offered under the control of the health care system. In all, it is estimated that the industry hands some 5 million educational leaflets a year to roughly 800,000 mothers.

The proposed legislation limits the provision of educational information material to parents and health professionals. Manufacturers will often find that they are no longer able to provide the variety and depth of information and material that can currently be found. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister can tell me what plans the Government have, given the mass exodus from the information and educational market that will probably take place if the regulations are enforced, to provide the additional information that will be necessary for mothers and health professionals in order to fulfil the obligations contained in the EC directive to

"provide objective and consistent information"

about infant feeding.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Faber: If the hon. Gentleman does not mind, I will keep going.

Mr. Morley: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I regret making a point of order, but I understand that it is a convention in the House that Members who have an interest declare that interest when they speak on a matter which relates directly to it. I have listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman, but I have not heard him declare his interest in Sterling Marketing, of which I understand that he is a director, and which is involved in advertising and marketing. The debate has some relevance to advertising and marketing. I wonder whether you could give us some guidance on that point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): The rules of the House are clear: any hon. Member who has an interest in a debate should declare it.

Mr. Faber: I am happy to put the hon. Gentleman's mind at rest. Sterling Marketing is not involved in advertising in any way. It produces mail order brochures and has absolutely nothing to do with either the infant formula market or the marketing of any good, let alone advertising. It produces mail order brochures for retail products. I have no connection with Sterling Marketing since I left it, except that I remain a shareholder.

What are the key factors that affect a mother's choice whether to breast-feed? They are rooted in deep-seated personal preferences and advice from family, friends and health professionals, and social factors. Since 1983, when marketing controls were introduced, the proportion of mothers who breast-feed to mothers who bottle-feed has barely altered.

In 1980, before the introduction of the 1983 voluntary code of practice, the breast-feeding rate among the population was 65 per cent. According to a written reply by the Under-Secretary of State for Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville), to the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) on 3 February, the figure was again 65 per cent. in 1985. After the 1988 voluntary ban on free samples, the latest Government-reported breast-feeding rate in 1990 was 64 per cent.—a drop of just 1 per cent.

In a complex psychological process, in which rationality often conflicts with emotion, up to a third of mothers choose to bottle-feed from the outset, while many more make a token gesture to breast-feed before giving up. More than half of all mothers feel comfortable and confident about bottle-feeding their baby, but the irrefutable fact remains that breast-feeding is the best option to adopt.

The Government's report "Infant feeding 1990" gave the top seven reasons that mothers gave for bottle-feeding. They were: so that other people could feed the baby, the mother's previous experience, that the mother disliked the idea of breast-feeding, embarrassment, to see how much milk the infant had drunk, medical reasons and an expectation of a quick return to work. Advertising of infant formula was not given as a reason why mothers chose to bottle-feed rather than to breast-feed.

I am happy to say that fathers, too, are responsible for influencing the feeding method. In 1992, independent research showed that fathers were found to have a high level of interest and involvement in the feeding process. Their attitude was likely to be a major influence on the woman's choice of feeding method, second only to her personal inclinations and way above the role of advertising.

Mr. Peter Kilfoyle (Liverpool, Walton): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Faber: I am a little pushed for time.

What is the role of advertising within the infant formula industry? Infant formula advertising in this country does not promote bottle-feeding over breast-feeding. It provides information to allow mothers to make an informed choice

about what to feed their infant should they choose to bottle-feed. In all current advertising, manufacturers already stress the superiority of breast over bottle-feeding. That will be further strengthened by the requirements of the European Community directive.

It is clear that the key reasons why infant formula manufacturers advertise—operating under the code of practice—are to provide information and to compete against other brands of infant formula, but not to promote bottle-feeding over breast-feeding.

A survey undertaken by the independent research company Market Trends earlier this year showed that all groups of health professionals vigorously oppose the Government's proposed ban on consumer advertising—64 per cent. of health visitors, 68 per cent. of midwives, 61 per cent. of general practitioners and 60 per cent. of directors of midwifery all disagreed with an advertising ban.

The same research overwhelmingly showed that parents want infant formula advertising, and most certainly do not want a ban on consumer advertising—88 per cent. of all mothers said that they did not want a ban, 74 per cent. of mothers who breast-feed only do not want a ban, and an astonishing 90 per cent. of mothers who both breast and bottle-feed did not support the proposed ban.

As well as depriving mothers of freedom of choice and free access to information, the draft regulations represent overpowering restrictions on free competition, and will discriminate against United Kingdom consumers and manufacturers by inhibiting free competition between companies and countries.

A ban on advertising will effectively freeze the present market situation in the UK, and manufacturers are likely to be faced with a static market, with roughly the proportions of market share that they currently hold.

Research and development in the field of infant nutrition is expensive and time-consuming, but leads to real and significant improvements in baby milk products, bringing them ever closer to breast milk. Unless manufacturers are able to make consumers aware of the differences and advantages of choosing one infant formula over another, there is little incentive for them to innovate and produce new products.

A ban on consumer advertising and the proposed restrictions on labelling information may mean that the rate of research and development slows down dramatically as manufacturers are simply unable to obtain any further benefits from it.

The proposed ban within the draft regulations on advertising to the grocery and drugstore trade will deny industry an important communication channel with its distributors. Trade advertising does not promote infant formula to consumers, but it serves to make retail outlets more aware of infant formula products that they may wish to stock. About 39 per cent. of all infant formula is sold through grocery outlets, and if a significant number of retailers are not permitted to have information about infant formula products, there is likely to be a reduction in the number of outlets that stock that formula.

Can my hon. Friend the Minister tell me of one other legal product that is freely and openly sold where such a ban on advertising is in effect? At a time when the Government, whether rightly or wrongly, refuse to ban the advertising to consumers of tobacco products, does he not think it ironic that we should be discussing a much more restrictive type of ban on, of all things, baby milk?

At a time when we are increasingly aware of the so-called level playing field in Europe and progressive deregulation here at home, why do the Government seek once again to go beyond what is proposed by Brussels? In January this year, my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, in a consultation document on the deregulation of the food industry, outlined the criteria for introducing new legislation. Does the proposed legislation go further than is necessary? What is likely to be its impact on business, has industry been adequately consulted, and what does it think?

The legislation goes further than is necessary and will not achieve its stated aim of promoting and protecting breast-feeding. The regulations attempt to introduce extra rules and regulations that go way beyond the EC directive and will be of benefit to no one, least of all the mothers.

I think that I can anticipate one aspect of my hon. Friend's reply—that these are draft regulations and we are still in a period of consultation. I can only say that I hope that he will take this as one further submission, as part of that process, in addition to the many submissions opposing the regulations that he has already received. Perhaps my hon. Friend would also like to consider the words of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on "BBC News" on 3 December in Brussels, when he said:

"National Governments don't always translate Community Directives into plain rules that everyone can understand. We sometimes add extra rules simply because they seem a good idea to Departments, to advisers, or to pressure groups."

Mothers want information to help them make an informed choice about what to feed their babies should they choose to bottle feed. They should not be made to feel that they are in some way doing something wrong or nasty if they are unable or unwilling to breast feed. I believe that it is right to leave the last word to a mother who wrote to the *Daily Mail* just last month:

"When I became pregnant with my little boy . . . I intended from the start to breastfeed him. But when Jordan was born, much to my dismay I found it extremely difficult—and for him the whole experience was very distressing. After four days of unsuccessful attempts, I reluctantly agreed to put Jordan on bottled milk and the result was fantastic: a much happier baby and a more relaxed mum . . . but at the time I felt extremely guilty and a complete and utter failure as a mother.

Hundreds of women are faced with a similar problem. Like me, they start out with good intentions, but after the birth of their child they find breastfeeding impossible. They are getting very negative messages from the Government about their ability as mothers."

I very much hope that my hon. Friend will take this opportunity tonight to send out a more positive message to all of those mothers.

11.40 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Nicholas Soames): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member fo Westbury (Mr. Faber) for raising this subject. It is a tribute to my hon. Friend that he should be surrounded this evening by his supporters and friends who have come to hear him debate the matter in such a formidably well-informed manner. I congratulate him on the clear, sensible and entirely reasonable way in which he put forward his case. This matter raises the most extraordinary heat on both sides of the argument and I know that there is currently a great deal of interest in it.

We issued proposals for United Kingdom regulations implementing the directive in December 1993. Since then, I have received a large number of letters from hon. Members about our proposals. We have had a good

[Mr. Nicholas Soames]

response to our consultation exercise and, far from being cynical, my hon. Friend was perfectly right when he said that we are still in a period of consultation. He may rest assured that what he has said tonight will be a very important part of that consultation, and we will certainly treat his speech as a submission.

I do not want to jump too far ahead, so I will return to consultation later. Before I deal with the points that my hon. Friend has raised, I am sure that it will be helpful to set out for the House the background to this issue.

As my hon. Friend is aware, the World Health Assembly has adopted an international code of marketing of breast milk substitutes drawn up by the World Health Organisation. The aim of this code is to contribute to the provision of safe and adequate nutrition for infants by the protection and promotion of breast feeding and by ensuring the proper use of breast milk substitutes.

The Government are fully committed to action to improve breast feeding rates; it is one of our undertakings in relation to the "Health of the Nation" initiative. Individual countries were left to decide how best to implement the World Health Organisation's recommendations in their own territories. The United Kingdom Government decided that it could best be done through industry self-regulation and, following consultation with interested parties, a voluntary code of practice came into being in 1983 to give effect to the aim and principles of the World Health Organisation code.

To complement this, the health departments in the United Kingdom provide guidance to health authorities and health professionals which draws attention to the aims and principles of the WHO code, the voluntary industry code of practice, the establishment of a code monitoring committee, and the responsibilities of health care professionals. That is the system that has operated in the United Kingdom for the past 10 years.

In the mid to late 1980s, the European Community started to interfere, frankly, and to consider the introduction of European Union legislation. In 1991, it adopted directives on the composition, marketing and export of infant formulae and follow-on formulae.

I want to stress two points to my hon. Friend. First, although the EC directives are intended to implement the aims and the principles of the WHO code, they do not adopt its provisions in every detail. As with all EC measures, a consensus had to be reached to reflect the vastly differing views and practices of the various member states.

The second and more important point is that the United Kingdom is required to implement the terms of the EC directive, not the WHO recommendations. In the usual way, therefore, the Government have considered the terms of the EC directives and have drafted regulations to give them effect in the United Kingdom. As I said earlier, those draft regulations were sent out to interested parties early in December 1993, and comments were invited on the proposals.

I should like to make it absolutely clear to my hon. Friend that there has been overwhelming support for the majority of the provisions proposed in the draft regulations. There has been a unanimous welcome for compositional requirements—infant formula is the sole source of nutrition for babies who are not breast-fed—and for labelling provisions that embody in statute that breast milk is without equal for infants in the first months of life.

Advertising is the one area on which opinion has been polarised. My hon. Friend has rightly identified that issue, and spoke about it sensibly. The manufacturers have complained that what the United Kingdom has proposed goes beyond the minimum requirements of the directive, is unnecessarily restrictive and does not conform with the Government's deregulation initiative.

I listened with great care to what my hon. Friend said about deregulation, the assurances given by the Prime Minister, and the entire thrust of my Ministry's legislative programme—to introduce regulation as a last resort. I must acknowledge that the latter point has struck a number of the hon. Members who have written to me, as it has struck me most formidably. I want to assure my hon. Friend that the decision will eventually be taken against that background as well as on all the other arguments.

I must also inform the House, however, that a large number of those who responded to the invitation to comment on the regulations were not only in support of the proposed advertising restrictions, but in some extraordinary way wanted them to be even more restrictive. They even went so far as requesting a total ban on advertising. They also want the advertising restriction to apply not only to infant formulae but to follow-on formulae. It is true to say that many of those letters were co-ordinated in a write-in.

It is right to consider what we are required to implement in the United Kingdom. Article 8 of the EC directive says:

"Advertising of infant formulae shall be restricted to publications specialising in baby care and scientific publications. Member states may further restrict or prohibit such advertising."

The directive also adds:

"Such advertising shall contain only information of a scientific and factual nature."

Regulation 17 of the draft United Kingdom regulations says:

"No person shall publish or display any advertisement for an infant formula except in a publication specialising in baby care or in a scientific publication of which, in either case, the intended readership is one of independent persons qualified in medicine, nutrition or pharmacy or having a professional qualification in maternal or child care."

As my hon. Friend has speculated, the wording of the United Kingdom regulations goes further than the minimum restriction in the directive, in that it restricts baby care publications to those with an intended readership of independent health care professionals. As I pointed out earlier, however, the directive allows member states to introduce further restrictions of their own.

Unequivocal medical advice has consistently supported breast feeding as the best way of feeding a baby. Restrictions on the advertising of infant formula have been developed to encourage mothers to give their children the best possible nutritional start in life. Given the health arguments in favour of breast feeding, we thought it right to explore the possibility of going further than the minimum required by the directive.

Other factors have to be taken into account when considering that possibility. Under the terms of the industry's voluntary code of practice, advertising in general baby care magazines read mainly by mothers and pregnant women is not permitted, although advertising is permitted if the magazines are distributed within the health care system. If we adopt the minimum laid down in the directive, it would appear to allow advertisements to be

placed in generally available baby care magazines. Should the UK regulations be less restrictive on advertising than those restrictions voluntarily adopted by the industry?

I am aware of the survey carried out by Bounty earlier this year on the proposed advertising restrictions. It has been suggested that the United Kingdom is the only country which is being more restrictive than the directive requires. We have made inquiries about other member states' intentions, and we await replies from some of them. However, from the information that we have received, it would appear that some countries—Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and France—intend to use the option in the directive to introduce restrictions beyond the minimum laid down in the directive.

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): So what?

Mr. Soames: So what nothing. I am merely telling my hon. Friend what the point of the argument is, and how the situation lies. That is what so what.

That is obviously something which the Government would wish to consider extremely carefully when finalising the regulations.

My hon. Friend said, and it is correct to assume, that, were an advertising ban to go through, we would, in my view, be in the not entirely satisfactory position of needing to make available the information that mothers need, solely through the voluntary sector. That is not necessarily a position in which we would wish to find ourselves.

My hon. Friend made another argument in relation to the advertising restrictions. The restrictions currently adopted voluntarily by the industry apply only to advertising aimed at the purchasers of the products. That is mainly mothers and pregnant women. The restrictions do not apply to the manufacturers' advertising to wholesalers and retailers.

However, the industry believes, and I have to say that it is correct, that the draft regulations would prohibit manufacturers from advertising to the trade, and that the ban would include leaflets and circulars, conference displays and other forms of communication. I am well aware of the strength of feeling about that point by people in the industry, and at this stage, as my hon. Friend correctly speculated, I have to say that I and my ministerial colleagues will consider carefully all those details before deciding the final form of the regulations.

It has been suggested—my hon. Friend mentioned it—that it is inconsistent to consider legislating against the advertising of infant formula while refusing to take similar action in the case of tobacco. The fundamental issues involved are not the same. Cigarette smoking is a matter of personal and adult choice, and the Government believe that voluntary agreements with the tobacco industry provide the best way of controlling its advertising.

It does not follow that the same solution is appropriate for infant formula advertising, where we are seeking to protect the best interests of people who are unable to exercise their own personal choice—the new-born. It is necessary to consider each case on its merits, and to explore all the options before reaching a decision. Consultation, as my hon. Friend is aware, is a fundamental part of that process.

I am aware that the European Community directive requires member states to implement its provisions by 1 June 1994. It is quite possible that our regulations will not be finalised, and made and laid before Parliament, by then. That will obviously have consequences for the coming into force date that the Government will need to consider.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the arguments that he raised in the debate. I can assure him that my right hon. and hon. Friends and I will bear all his arguments in mind when we consider the way in which the draft UK regulations should best be finalised, which we hope to do soon. I will ensure that my hon. Friend is informed when that occurs. I once again congratulate him on an extremely well-informed and interesting speech.

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at five minutes to Twelve midnight.

House of Commons

Thursday 28 April 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair.*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

FEDERATION OF STREET TRADERS UNION (LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES ACT 1990) (AMENDMENT) BILL *(By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time upon Thursday 5 May.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Cross-border Security

1. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about recent developments in cross-border security.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Sir John Wheeler): Both the British and Irish Governments are committed to working closely together to maintain and enhance security co-operation. The Chief Constable made it clear last month that co-operation between the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Garda was "at an all time high".

Lady Olga Maitland: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply. Will he join me in condemning the brutal murder of Gerry Evans in Belfast last night by the IRA off-shoot INLA? In view of the increased number of atrocities now taking place on both sides of the border, perpetrated by the IRA, Sinn Fein and the loyalists, will he join me in encouraging the Irish Republic to build on the success of Operation Madronna to stiffen our security procedures—by, for example, increased surveillance on the border, helicopter flights and joint intelligence?

Sir John Wheeler: The whole House will condemn without reservation the horror of the murders that have taken place in Belfast and Northern Ireland in recent days—eight murders in eight days. There are those who commit these appalling crimes and those who know who commit them. The public can help the police by using the confidential hotline and can assist the police in apprehending those who commit these abominable offences. As it is, the police are increasingly successful in the number of people whom they apprehend. As to my hon. Friend's second point, Operation Madronna has been particularly successful, involving the police service of the Republic, the RUC and police forces throughout the United Kingdom; 41 searches have taken place and a large quantity of drugs, stolen property, cash and other documents have been seized.

Dr. Hendron: I know that the Minister is aware that people in my constituency of West Belfast are being shot down as though they were rats, in the streets or in their houses. For example, Francis Rice was shot by the Provos two days ago, 16 young people had their knees blown off by the Provos, Liam Thompson was murdered last night by the interface in Springfield park, and Mr. Rand Brown, a shopkeeper starting work at 5.30 this morning, was brutally murdered. I put it to the Minister that the people of all of Belfast, especially west and north Belfast, are frightened. In Springfield park, where Liam Thompson was murdered last night, people complained yesterday about a breach of, or opening in, the interface there—they were concerned about that. I shall be seeing police chiefs about that myself.

Can the Minister give a guarantee, so far as he can, that the police will provide protection? I emphasise the word "protection". I am not asking for a saturation of all sorts of areas; I am asking for protection in the evenings and at night time in the major housing estates and along interfaces, whether they are in west Belfast or north Belfast. I would appreciate that very much.

Madam Speaker: Before the Minister replies, let me remind the House that I am seeking brisk questions to Ministers and brisk answers. The last time that we had questions on Northern Ireland, the House reached only Question 7. That is not right. Members who have questions on the Order Paper have a right to be called, and I hope that we can move briskly today.

Sir John Wheeler: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern about his constituents. Let me give him an assurance that the police will spare no effort in pursuing those who committed these evil acts. I can tell the House that, already this year, 143 people have been charged with serious terrorist offences, including 31 with murder or attempted murder.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I am sure that the Minister is aware that those in the rural districts also feel the concern expressed by the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron) and are aware of what happened in Garvagh. All those deeds must be condemned without reservation. I trust that today the Minister will tell us something about the height of security between the forces of the Crown and those of the Irish Republic in the Crossmaglen area. What is all the problem about, when the Government are seeking to defend Royal Ulster Constabulary men and members of the British Army and to get them some sort of defence against those murderers in that area?

Sir John Wheeler: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the RUC and the Gardai are working with the highest degree of co-operation in the exercise at Crossmaglen, as I can further assure him that every effort will be made to protect all citizens in Northern Ireland, regardless of where they may live and who they may be.

Visitors

2. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the number of visitors to Northern Ireland in 1993; and what is his estimate of their total expenditure.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tim Smith): In 1993, 1.26 million

visitors came to Northern Ireland spending approximately £173 million. That was the fifth successive annual increase in visitor numbers. I regard that as highly encouraging in what was a difficult year for the tourist trade worldwide.

Mr. Coombs: Does my hon. Friend agree that those are excellent figures, notwithstanding the difficulties in the Province that have been referred to in the past few minutes? What further steps is the excellent Northern Ireland tourist board proposing to take further to promote tourism for visitors from outside the United Kingdom?

Mr. Smith: In the past few weeks, the Northern Ireland tourist board has opened a new office in Glasgow to encourage more visitors from Scotland. Yesterday, I opened a conference bureau in Belfast, which is designed to encourage more conference visitors to the city.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: Does the Minister agree that many of those visitors came through the port of Larne last year and that to enable them to get to various parts of the Province we should have good lines of communication? When will the Minister dual the carriageway between Gingles corner in Larne and Corr's corner in Newtownabbey? When will he do a similar job to the A26 between Antrim and Ballymena, which would not only open up the north and north-west of the Province to visitors but assist those people who have to travel from that part of the Province to the new hospital in Antrim?

Mr. Smith: That work will be undertaken when resources allow.

Mr. William O'Brien: Will the Minister comment on recent reports about a 5.5 per cent. drop in the number of visitors to Northern Ireland over the past year? Will he also comment on the reduction in the grant to the Northern Ireland tourist board and accept that now is the wrong time to cut grant, when we want to build up confidence and increase visitors to the Province? The tourist board has yet to reach its potential and more jobs can be created. Will he give an assurance that he will back continuing support for the tourist board and help local authorities that are pressing to introduce more tourism in their areas?

Mr. Smith: During the past five years or so, resources devoted to the tourist board were increased substantially. We now have an extremely professional organisation which, given the difficult image problem that the Province has, is doing an excellent job.

United States (Ministerial Visit)

3. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received in respect of his recent visit to the United States; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Sir Patrick Mayhew): Warm support has been represented to me both in North America and here for our firm opposition to terrorism and for the Downing street declaration.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, as he made clear in a recent speech to the Foreign Policy Association in New York, more than 90 per cent. of people in the north and south of Ireland renounce violence? Does he also agree that, as with many other intractable problems in the world, democracy is the answer? Is not it incumbent on all parties in Northern Ireland to espouse democracy, to renounce violence and to come to the negotiating table?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I warmly agree with what my hon. Friend has said. He is absolutely right about the number of people, north and south, who want an end to violence now. I note that Mr. Reynolds said in Dublin yesterday that the two Governments were now engaged at official level in preparing a framework document which everyone would be able to work on, whether Sinn Fein entered the process or not. That is a reference to the talks process in which so many hopes reside.

Mr. Molyneaux: In the course of his successful visit to the United States and Canada, did the Secretary of State detect an utter rejection of the IRA? Was he aware of a new resolve in both countries to underpin the guarantees of self-determination for the people of Northern Ireland without any fear of coercion or persuasion?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Indeed I did. I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his remarks. There is no doubt that the spectacle of both Governments standing firmly together on a basis of consent and the rejection of violence has satisfied people in both Canada and the United States that those who continue to use or justify violence do so recognising that they cannot achieve their political objective by democratic means. Theirs is a profoundly unpopular stance in north America.

Rev. William McCrea: Does the Secretary of State understand the horror felt by my constituents and many others in the Province when he said in the United States that it was not the Government's intention to humiliate the IRA? In times past, the Government have stressed that their intention is not only to humiliate the IRA terrorists but to annihilate them.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I should be grateful for a reference for that citation. What I said in my New York speech was that the British Government would not surrender to terrorism, and that no one would expect us to do so, but that to give up violence did not mean that one had to surrender aspirations or objectives. All that people have to do is abandon violence and it will then be open to them to enter the political democratic process. That is the point, and I should have thought that it was rather a sensible one.

Mr. Winnick: Is the Secretary of State aware that at yesterday's meeting in Dublin of the British-Irish parliamentary body, at which Mr. Reynolds spoke, all the Irish politicians who spoke made it clear that they were completely opposed to terrorism? There was not the slightest difference between British and Irish parliamentarians on that issue, or in their support for the joint declaration. Does not that demonstrate that people and politicians in the Irish republic are totally opposed to all forms of terrorist violence in the north, and stand with us in the House of Commons on the issue?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: That is entirely true. It was also apparent to me when I read accounts of the successful tour of the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and his party in the United States. The Americans were very impressed by the fact that that party stood behind the principles of the joint declaration. There

is unanimity, and people who resort to violence and to justifying it are going nowhere except, in appropriate cases, to prison, for a very long time.

Mr. Couchman: During his successful trip to the United States, did my right hon. and learned Friend speak to anyone in authority about the continuing failure of the United States authorities both to extradite people to the United Kingdom when they are wanted for serious crimes here and to prosecute those who give comfort to the IRA by trading in arms or raising money?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I spoke to the Attorney-General, Mrs. Reno, who was very forthright in her desire to help in all matters connected with security. With great respect to my hon. Friend, it is not correct to say that the United States authorities fail to extradite people; extradition in the United States, as elsewhere, is fundamentally a judicial matter. We have cases outstanding in California, on which I will not comment. In a recent case, people were acquitted of offences in Texas; my hon. Friend may have that in mind.

Holding Centres Report

4. **Ms Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to publish his detailed reply to the first annual report of the Independent Commissioner for the Holding Centres.

Sir John Wheeler: Sir Louis Blom-Cooper's first annual report as Independent Commissioner for the Holding Centres is currently receiving detailed and careful consideration. The Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Police Authority for Northern Ireland are being consulted on a number of suggestions put forward by Sir Louis. The Government's response will be made public as soon as practicable.

Ms Short: Does the Minister agree that, whatever the disappointment and anger that we feel towards the IRA for not responding to the opportunity to advance towards peace, it is crucial that the administration of justice in Northern Ireland gives real justice to everyone, no matter what they are accused of? Will he therefore act on the recommendations of the Standing Advisory Committee on Human Rights, Lord Colville and the Independent Commissioner on Holding Centres and immediately introduce video recording of interviews in the province?

Sir John Wheeler: I very much agree with the first part of the hon. Lady's question. She is absolutely right that confidence in the criminal justice system must be enjoyed by all sections of the community. I am glad to tell the House that the commissioner found absolutely nothing that might give rise to any cause for concern about the care and treatment of those in the centres.

As to the question of the use of video recording, very careful consideration will be given to that.

Export Businesses

5. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has had about prospects for export businesses based in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: Recent business surveys and anecdotal evidence both suggest that the prospects for Northern Ireland's exporters are excellent. I am delighted to be able to tell the House that seven Northern Ireland companies, both large and small, have this year won the Queen's award for export.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my hon. Friend agree that the firm of F.G. Wilson Engineering in the constituency of the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) is a worthy third-time winner of the Queen's award for exports? With over 90 per cent. of its output going to 140 different countries, is not the firm an example not only to other business in Northern Ireland but to businesses throughout the United Kingdom?

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend is entirely right. F.G. Wilson is an outstandingly successful engineering company and it shows what can be achieved in any part of the United Kingdom. I certainly congratulate it on its third Queen's award for exports.

Mr. Beggs: The tributes of the hon. Member for Bolton North-East (Mr. Thurnham) and of the Minister to a successful exporting company will be much appreciated by both employees and management.

Will the Minister encourage courses in higher education on the appreciation of exports? Will he also encourage companies with experience to share that experience with other companies that have, as yet unrealised, export potential in Northern Ireland as a means of increasing employment opportunities?

Mr. Smith: On the hon. Gentleman's second point, the Department of Trade and Industry export advisers are there to do precisely that job and they advise companies that have no experience of exporting on overcoming some of the difficulties. On his first point, I should like to have a look at what he suggested.

Economic Regeneration

6. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next expects to meet representatives of the small business community to discuss economic regeneration.

Mr. Tim Smith: I regularly meet representatives of small businesses through company visits and formal meetings to discuss a wide range of issues, including economic regeneration.

Mr. Bellingham: In the aftermath of the dreadful sectarian killings which have taken place, many people may be filled with doom and gloom. Does my hon. Friend agree that there is one bright light in the form of the recent extremely encouraging economic news from the Province? Is not that in no small part due to the courage and drive of the small firms sector?

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend is entirely right about the good news on the economic front, and that stems from large and small firms. I should like to pay tribute to the work of the local enterprise development unit, LEDU, in encouraging small businesses to grow and export.

Mr. McGrady: Will the Minister undertake to review his departmental designations of deprived areas for the purpose of industrial regeneration, as they do not reflect the multiple deprivation and the needs of many areas, including my own? Will he recognise that there is a connection between the environmental issue and economic

regeneration? Will he knock some of the quangos' heads together in the rural areas that most of my hon. Friends represent so that they work in harmony, rather than in opposition to one another, both at the Department of Environment and the Department of Economic Development?

Mr. Smith: At the moment, we assess unemployment on the basis of travel-to-work areas. I shall have another look at whether there is a more sophisticated way to achieve what the hon. Gentleman has in mind.

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: In his discussions with the small business community, will the Minister stress the advantages of locating within the north Belfast enterprise zones and the small business units in that community?

Mr. Smith: I should certainly like to encourage more firms to invest in both north and west Belfast because of the high rates of unemployment in that part of the city. I was pleased to attend the other day, with the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron), an expansion programme at Delta Print and Packaging and I hope to see more such expansions in that part of the city.

Mr. Fabricant: Is my hon. Friend aware that a group of business men in Atlanta, Georgia recently voted Northern Ireland as the prime location for investment in the European Union? Is not that a tribute to the incentives of the Northern Ireland Office to introduce businesses into Northern Ireland?

Mr. Smith: Yesterday afternoon, I went to see the staff of the Industrial Development Board who work on inward investment to congratulate them on what they have achieved—they have been working all over the world, including in Atlanta—because we have now seen a number of successes and substantial jobs announcements.

Mr. Stott: In view of the report by Professor Derek Birrell and Carol Wilson, will the Minister confirm the Government's continued support for "Making Belfast Work", the initiative which they started some years ago? Will he also outline the steps that the Government will take to encourage private industry to invest and create full-time jobs, not part-time jobs, of which there are far too many, particularly in the initiative to which I have just referred?

Mr. Smith: On Tuesday afternoon, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State announced that the "Making Belfast Work" initiative will continue for a further three years. Some £120 million has already been devoted to that initiative and we are determined to ensure that the resources devoted over the next three years are targeted even more accurately on those most in need.

Government Expenditure

7. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average Government expenditure per head of population, excluding security expenditure, in Northern Ireland; and what information he has on the figures for Scotland, England and Wales.

Sir John Wheeler: Identifiable general Government expenditure, excluding security expenditure, per head of population in Northern Ireland in 1992-93 was £3,983. Information on the position in Scotland, England and Wales is available in the "Statistical Supplement to the Financial Statement and Budget Report 1994-95".

Sir Teddy Taylor: As a continuing reduction in unemployment is one of the best ways to cut high public expenditure, will the Minister look seriously and carefully at the consequences for jobs in Northern Ireland of the proposed massive increase in EC aid to the adjacent Republic of Ireland? As that gap is already very wide, what on earth is the point of extending it further? Will it not just create jobs in one place and destroy them in another?

Sir John Wheeler: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his well-known interest in that subject. European Community funding to member states and regions in respect of the structural and cohesion funds reflects the circumstances of each case. Northern Ireland, as a region of the United Kingdom, benefits from a substantial annual transfer of resources from the Exchequer, over and above European Community funding. The Republic of Ireland is a member state of the Community and receives its funding on that basis. The Government are always conscious of the implications of EC funding arrangements.

Mr. Canavan: Does the Minister agree with the Taoiseach's statement yesterday that the total British Government subsidy to Northern Ireland, including security costs, is now about £3.3 billion a year? Does not that figure reveal the magnitude of the peace dividend and its potential benefit for all the people of the UK as well as of the entire island of Ireland?

Sir John Wheeler: The subvention to Northern Ireland from Great Britain is now some £3.4 billion, but the citizens of Northern Ireland are citizens of the United Kingdom. They are entitled to equality of treatment with citizens of the United Kingdom in the services that they receive.

Mr. Barry Porter: Pursuing that point, will my right hon. Friend note that the Taoiseach also suggested yesterday that, in the highly unlikely event of the citizens of the Province deciding to leave the United Kingdom, that subvention from the UK Treasury would, in some way, be continued?

It might be sensible to disabuse the Taoiseach of that idea, if it is part of his strategy, and remind him of the comment made by Lord Fitt some years ago that if he wants us to leave the house we should not be expected to leave the purse on the mantlepiece.

Sir John Wheeler: My hon. Friend has made his point, but, in the absence of any knowledge of what the Taoiseach said, I should not like to discuss exactly what implications his statements may have for future financial expenditure of any sort.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Do the expenditure figures referred to by the Minister include the £100 million that has to be paid each year by British taxpayers for southern Irish students to come to northern Irish universities because they cannot get grants in the Republic of Ireland and are required, under European Community regulations, to be given grants by the British taxpayer?

Sir John Wheeler: Again, I appreciate the right hon. Gentleman's concern about the movement of money in that respect, but citizens of the United Kingdom benefit from educational and other activities in the Republic of Ireland.

Security

8. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a further statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I regret to say that this year 19 deaths have been caused by terrorist action. Unrelenting and highly effective action by the security forces continues. In consequence, up to 27 April 143 people have been charged with terrorist-related offences, including 31 with murder or attempted murder.

Mr. Hunter: Bearing in mind that terrorism is the greatest abuse of civil liberty, will my right hon. and learned Friend give serious attention to the enhanced security proposals from the Royal Ulster Constabulary and other sources, including the admissibility of hearsay and electronically gathered evidence, redefining the right to silence, providing greater witness protection and encouraging supergrass evidence?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: My hon. Friend will know that the right to silence was adjusted several years ago in Northern Ireland along the lines that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary proposes to adopt in England now. Criminal law must respond effectively to the terrorist challenge and must do so in a balanced way. We always keep the matter under review and heed the views of the Chief Constable. But we also heed the view of, among others, the judiciary, and its likely approach in practice to specific innovations that may be suggested.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I wonder what the great British public would say if they were asked their views on the deployment of young men on the streets of Belfast and other trouble spots in Northern Ireland. Might they not say, "Let's get them out"?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have a good deal of knowledge of that sort of question. My strong belief is that the people of this country recognise that there is a duty to protect their fellow countrymen against the threat—carried out, in all too many cases, by bombing and shooting—that they could be driven out of their country. That is very well understood. I do not believe that there is a serious body of opinion which says, "Let them suffer".

Sir James Kilfedder: I join in the condemnation of the sectarian slaughter that has brought grief to so many Protestant and Catholic families in Northern Ireland. Does the Secretary of State not agree that the terrorists aim further to divide the community of Northern Ireland when the emphasis should be placed on reconciliation and healing? Can he give an assurance that further steps will be taken to deal with terrorism, particularly in view of the revelations that the IRA has had talks with the intelligence services of Iran with the purpose of obtaining money and ammunition?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The Government are aware that there have been contacts between Iran and the IRA and my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, summoned Iran's chargé d'affaires today to express the Government's condemnation of that. I share the condemnation by the hon. Member for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder) of the murders that he mentioned. We shall always keep under review the measures that can be taken in law to help the security forces in their unrelenting and impartial campaign to prevent murders and similar actions from being committed, and to bring those responsible to justice.

Mr. Benn: Has the Secretary of State seen the report by Brian Lenihan, the Chairman of the Dail Foreign Affairs Committee in Dublin and a former Irish Foreign Minister, that the time has now come to talk directly with Sinn Fein? Is it not a fact that in Bosnia ceasefire talks go on all the time in the hope of ending the violence, that historically all violence has been ended by discussions opening up a new perspective, and that that has been the considered opinion of the overwhelming majority of British people over 20 years when that question has been put to them in opinion polls?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I think that the essential feature in this question is that this country is a democracy. If one talks with—by which the right hon. Gentleman necessarily means negotiate with—those who, in a democracy, are using violence for political purposes, one fatally undermines those who accept the constitutional restraints of democratic politics.

That is not just my view. It is the view of the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic and I believe it to be the view of the vast majority of people in this country. They know that defending democracy is always expensive and they know that the price is always worth paying.

Mr. Robathan: My right hon. and learned Friend may be interested to know that as a young man I was deployed on the streets of Belfast and that neither I nor any of my colleagues ever suggested that we should be withdrawn. However, we now ask—some nine years after the Anglo-Irish Agreement—what progress is being made with the Irish Republic in catching the terrorists south of the border who come north of the border to murder citizens of the United Kingdom and then return to their havens in the south?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: When my hon. Friend, who has personal experience of these problems, raises that question I think that I should say rather emphatically that the Government meant it when they said many times in the past that the level of co-operation between the two police forces has never been higher than it is at the moment. That is the view expressed recently by Sir Hugh Annesley, the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, and I have personal knowledge of the very close relationship between him and the Commissioner. There have been many recent successes by the Gardai south of the border in finding arms and munitions and disrupting attacks, although there is no doubt that more could be done with more resources. That can always be said in all circumstances, but I pay tribute to what is being done.

Mr. McNamara: Is the Secretary of State aware of the Opposition's support for the statements by the Minister of State to the Iranian chargé d'affaires this morning? That is a quite deplorable situation and he has our complete support in what he is doing. We also express our sympathy in relation to those who have been murdered in the recent spate of sectarian killings, whether in Garvagh or in

Belfast. Are the Minister and the Chief Constable satisfied that they have sufficient officers and troops at their disposal to be able to defend the sensitive areas in Belfast? Furthermore, can the Minister give an undertaking to the House that the type of opportunities that were given to the terrorists last night in their attacks across the peace line will be carefully checked? What sort of warnings did the RUC give to the local population and were they sufficiently protected?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am grateful for what the hon. Gentleman said about the Iranian involvement and, of course, I am also grateful for the sympathy that he has expressed. The latest advice that I have received from the Chief Constable, who is my principal adviser on security matters, is that he is satisfied with the force levels currently at his disposal. As for the Springvale episode last night, that is being investigated by the RUC.

Mr. Hume: Will the Secretary of State take clear steps totally to dispel the prejudice of people such as his own Back Bencher the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) in relation to what is happening in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland? Will he confirm that over the last 25 years 99.9 per cent. of all of those who have been arrested and convicted of acts of violence in Northern Ireland were from Northern Ireland? Will he also confirm that the security costs per head of population are much higher in the Republic of Ireland than in Northern Ireland? Will he do all that he can to remove the desperate prejudice among some of his Back Benchers, which is a serious part of our problem?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I think that the hon. Gentleman, for once, does less than justice to the good faith and serious concern of Conservative Members and to their interest in finding a solution to a desperately difficult problem. That problem imposes heavy burdens, both financial and—more importantly—in terms of the lives of the people of this country, including the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan). I do not therefore believe that this matter is helpfully attended to by making the sort of assertions that the hon. Gentleman has made. I understand very well my hon. Friend's concern; it is shared by all Conservative Members.

Intimidation Of Witnesses

9. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on measures to combat the results of intimidation of witnesses in criminal cases.

Sir John Wheeler: The practical arrangements for the safety and protection of Crown witnesses are matters for the Chief Constable who operates the witness protection scheme, but the Government condemn absolutely any attempt by anyone who seeks to damage the criminal justice system by any form of intimidation.

Mr. Trimble: I am sorry to say that that was a wholly inadequate reply. Has the Minister read the leading article in the current issue of *Parliamentary Brief*, written by Paul Wilkinson, the United Kingdom's leading academic expert on terrorism? If so, has the Minister noticed, among other things, that the article recommends that the Government introduce a statutory witness encouragement and protection scheme, drawing on the experience of continental countries with a better record in this respect than the Government's? Did he also notice the recommendation of certain other changes that we have recommended consistently over the past year? Would it not be better to respond to those reasoned arguments than quietly to brief the press, as the Minister's office did last week, to the effect that the Government will do nothing, while maintaining their usual front in this House?

Sir John Wheeler: The Government always welcome suggestions and ideas for improvements in these serious matters, but I suggest that the hon. Gentleman does a grave disservice to the Royal Ulster Constabulary when he implies that the Chief Constable cannot operate his existing scheme successfully in the best interests of the protection of witnesses. The police will continue to do that now and in the future.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if there were more publicity for the RUC's excellent record of arresting people and less publicity for Sinn Fein and the terrorists, more witnesses would be willing to come forward as they would realise that these terrible men of violence are being successfully prosecuted?

Sir John Wheeler: My hon. Friend is quite right. The success of a police operation requires the support of the public. The RUC and the security services are increasingly successful in their apprehension of the people who commit these dreadful crimes. The public, too, can play their part by giving information to the police which enables them to fulfil their task.

Electricity

10. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about establishing an interconnector with the Scottish electricity grid.

Mr. Tim Smith: The proposed Northern Ireland Electricity interconnector will be the subject of public inquiries in both Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Home Robertson: Now that the Irish Republic's electricity supply board has dropped the proposal for a connection with the electricity system in Wales, will the Minister acknowledge that the interconnector between Ireland and Scotland will be beneficial, not only to Scotland's generation industry but to consumers in Northern Ireland—and possibly also to consumers in the Republic of Ireland, who will thereby gain access to extremely competitively priced Scottish electricity? Will the Minister be supporting the application to the European Community for Interreg funding for the interconnector with Scotland, and for the reinstatement of the grid linking Northern Ireland and the Republic?

Mr. Smith: I much agree with the hon. Gentleman. Northern Ireland's electricity system is isolated at the moment. I think that all the benefits that he describes will flow from the establishment of the interconnector, which will be supported by European funds.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the great advantages of being part of the United Kingdom is the fact that the interconnector can plug into Scotland's capacity to export energy, and the fact that Northern Ireland could enjoy the benefits of that?

Mr. Smith: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend about the advantages that he describes for Scotland.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Under-Secretary of State consider the possibility of having a conjoint public inquiry instead of separate ones in Northern Ireland and Scotland, as problems would arise if they reached different conclusions? Would it not be much better to have one reporter carrying out an inquiry into the whole interconnector and, one hopes, rejecting the entire proposal?

Mr. Smith: To the meet the hon. Gentleman's point, I understand that the reporter in Scotland and the inspector in Northern Ireland may well co-operate in the discussion and consideration of certain common issues.

Joint Declaration

12. **Dr. Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the joint declaration remains on the table.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The declaration remains, and will remain, a free-standing declaration of principles. It is not for negotiation.

Dr. Spink: While I am pleased that the declaration is not time limited, will my hon. Friend confirm and make it clear that the validity of the joint declaration cannot be affected by the response of any particular party? Does he agree that the whole world must now see that the words of Sinn Fein blaming the British Government for a stalemate are totally false?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I very much agree with my hon. Friend, and I should like to endorse, with respect, what the Taoiseach said yesterday:

"I think we will all be entitled, particularly in view of the events of the last couple of weeks, which have left several dead, to seek in our turn some clarification from those responsible for the continuing violence".

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 28 April.

The Prime Minister: (**Mr. John Major**) This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mrs. Campbell: As the management of British Rail Maintenance Ltd. has announced the loss of 600 jobs at Eastleigh, following the fragmentation and privatisation of British Rail, what message can the Prime Minister give to the residents of Eastleigh who are to be made redundant, or does he feel that it is not a matter for him?

The Prime Minister: I seem to recall that on many occasions in the past when privatisation has been mentioned there have been such questions and imputations that the service would fall. In every instance, the service has improved for people and the costs have been maintained. We can see that most evidently in the energy industries, but in others as well.

Mr. Budgen: As it is suspected that no fewer than 60 of the employees of a respectable employer such as Southwark council may be unjustified overstaying immigrants in Britain, will my right hon. Friend give an undertaking that there will be an urgent review of the possibility of introducing identity cards into this country?

The Prime Minister: As I have said on a previous occasion, there is a strong case to be made for identity cards. There are undoubtedly great practical difficulties in introducing them and there are other matters to be considered as well, but we have been looking at some of the options in that respect and we propose to continue doing so.

Mr. John Smith: Now that the Prime Minister has overruled his Health Secretary on the question of media access to Bart's, will he now overrule her on the far more important issue of her disgraceful decision to order the closure of the accident and emergency unit at Bart's?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows, there was never any question but that he or any other right hon. or hon. Member could visit Bart's or any other hospital. The right hon. Gentleman wished to do what he has done on so many occasions in the past and take the opportunity of turning the national health service into a political football—*[Interruption.]*—and the expression on the face of the right hon. and learned Gentleman shows us that that is the case. So far as the accident and emergency departments at Bart's and the other London hospitals are concerned, perhaps the right hon. and learned Gentleman will tell us whether he agrees with his own health spokesman who, apropos this matter, said:

"The status quo is not an option."

Mr. John Smith: If there was never any question about myself or other Opposition spokespeople being allowed to visit Bart's—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I call the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) to order—*[Interruption.]* Order. I call the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) to order. I have heard enough from both sides.

Mr. John Smith: If there never was any problem, why was I telephoned by the Department of Health to tell me that media access was not to be permitted, although the Prime Minister went to Basildon with precisely those facilities? Furthermore, can the right hon. Gentleman tell us why the Government rely, for their policy on London, on the Tomlinson report, which is now fully discredited by nearly everyone in London?

The Prime Minister: On the latter point, the Tomlinson report is not discredited by nearly everyone in London. On the question of accident and emergency cover in London, if the right hon. and learned Gentleman were more concerned with the realities of health care and less concerned with party politicking at the expense of the national health service, he might have looked at some of the proposed improvements to accident and emergency departments in London—at Homerton, King's, Lewisham, Royal London, St. Thomas's, UCLH, Whipps Cross and Whittington, none of which he wishes to mention at all. I said a moment ago that there was no difficulty about the right hon. and learned Gentleman himself going to Bart's. Many people will judge for themselves whether he was

simply trying to make party political points. I took the view that it was a matter for his conscience, and I therefore decided that there should certainly be no ban. As for Basildon, for many years rules have been laid down by the Cabinet Secretary concerning the three weeks before elections; those did not cover the time of my visit to Basildon.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Prime Minister not appreciate that the reality of the Government's plans for London is that 19 hospitals will be either closed or merged and that 2,500 desperately needed hospital beds are to be lost? Why does the right hon. Gentleman not halt this disaster for health care in London and order an immediate moratorium and the review that all of London wants?

The Prime Minister: Do I hear a pledge of more expenditure from the right hon. and learned Gentleman? What he is saying sounds very much as if he is in the business of spending vast extra sums of money. Either he is proposing to do so—in which case he should tell us how much and where the money is to come from—or he should withdraw what he has said in the last couple of minutes. If he is concerned about the national health service, he might also reflect on his own party's record—an NHS budget that fell by 3 per cent., capital spending that was cut by one third, nurses' pay that was cut by 21 per cent. and doctors' and dentists' pay that went down by 23 per cent. Perhaps he will also tell us which of his spokesmen he agrees with—the one who said that the party would increase health spending to 7 per cent. of gross domestic product, at a cost of £6 billion, or the one who a few days later produced his "Health 2000" documents with every extra expenditure commitment removed.

Mr. Elletson: Is my right hon. Friend aware that this bank holiday weekend thousands of tourists will flock to Britain's leading tourist resort—Blackpool—to see the tower, which during the week was painted gold to celebrate its 100th anniversary? Does he agree that the Blackpool tower is now a glittering symbol of the success of the British tourist industry, which is the second largest industry in the country, employing thousands of people? Does he further agree that the greatest threat to jobs in tourism comes from the Labour party with its support for the European social chapter and the European socialist manifesto?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right in each of his points. There is no doubt that the Blackpool tower is a world famous landmark. I hope that this year and in future years it will continue to attract hundreds of thousands of extra tourists to Blackpool and other parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ashdown: Is the Prime Minister aware that Liverpool city council appears to be preparing to suppress a report into the mismanagement of public funds amounting to £5 million on the city's cable television contract? Will he confirm that he supports the principle that the public have a right to know on these matters as much in Liverpool as they have in Westminster?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman makes his point very eloquently, but if I may say so I think that the point was not aimed quite so much at me as perhaps in another direction not so far away.

Mr. Jenkin: May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the level of the council tax in Colchester? Is he aware that substantial extra grants were given to Lib-Lab Essex and Lib-Lab Colchester and that they still chose to put the council tax up? Does not that demonstrate that they always put taxes up, even when they do not have to?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend draws an important distinction between the parties, in that the opposition parties are keen to raise tax specifically to fund extra and more ambitious spending programmes. There is no doubt that the average council tax for Labour authorities is very high, far higher than that of Conservative authorities, and that the average council tax of Liberal authorities is also substantially higher than that of Conservative authorities.

Q2. **Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 28 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cunningham: Will the Prime Minister give an undertaking to carry out a drastic overhaul of the Child Support Agency following the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux report which highlights human misery and poverty inflicted by the agency?

The Prime Minister: I have not yet had a chance to study the NACAB report, but I think that no one—perhaps "no one" is a rash statement—or that there are few in the House who disagree with the basic principles behind the Child Support Act 1991, and I think that few would dispute that adequate financial maintenance for children is an important contributing factor to their overall welfare. Of course, the CSA has to balance a whole range of interests—the parent with care, the absent parent, the taxpayer. It is a new system and we are keeping it under review. As I have told the House before, when and if we determine that it needs change, we will look at that change and introduce it.

Mrs. Gorman: Does my right hon. Friend agree with Lord Young who, when speaking to the Institute of Directors, said:

"We are wasting our time in Europe and fiddling while the Treaty of Rome burns"?

The Prime Minister: I think that my right hon. and noble Friend made a number of points about the European Community and about the general position of Europe in its trading attitude with the rest of the world. On that point he was correct, for I have made the point in the House on many occasions. It is not a question of Europe competing within itself—the British with the Germans, with the French and with the Spanish—but of the competitiveness of the whole of Europe with our competitors around the world: in Japan, in the Pacific basin, in the United States and elsewhere. I entirely agree with my right hon. and noble Friend on the importance of that matter.

Q3. **Mr. Kilfoyle:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 28 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Kilfoyle: Can the Prime Minister explain why so many of his Conservative colleagues in local government in London wish to avoid being seen on the campaign trail with him?

The Prime Minister: I have spent some time on the campaign trail—perhaps unlike the hon. Gentleman—with my Conservative colleagues in London, and I think that he is incorrect.

Sir Peter Fry: Will my right hon. Friend, when he is on the campaign trail, point out that, of the 45 million cases dealt with annually by the health service, the vast majority are happy with the service that they have received? Is it not time to praise the health service rather than using every odd case as an opportunity to criticise the dedicated people in it?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right. Literally millions of people in Britain are treated by the health service every year, and they know from their own direct experience how good the health service is and what has happened to funding and the improvements in funding of the health service during recent years. If that funding had not been there, there would not have been an increase in the number of patients treated in hospital and as out-patients or in the quality of health care, and a wider range of treatments would not have been available. Every hon. Member knows that to be the case, and those who refuse to acknowledge it do a disservice to the dedicated professionals in the health service.

Speaker's Statement

3.30 pm

Madam Speaker: I have a short statement to make to the House. The House will recall that on 13 April I undertook to reflect upon the way in which the House is informed of the death of one of its Members.

I have taken account of a wide range of opinion on this matter, including views expressed to me on behalf of the Procedure Committee, and I have had regard to the very different considerations that apply to individual cases. I have concluded that there is at the moment no consensus about a single change in our practice that would meet all cases, and that it would therefore be best, for the present, for a formal announcement to continue to be made as hitherto. In addition, of course, there will be the opportunity for a memorial service or meeting to be arranged. Moreover, the Order Paper is available for the expression of opinion by way of motions and can, therefore, be used for Members' tributes to former colleagues to be placed on record.

If hon. Members have any further thoughts on this matter, I should be glad if they would let me have them in writing. It is not something that I think we could profitably spend time on now.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): The business for next week will be as follows:

TUESDAY 3 MAY—Second Reading of the Education Bill [*Lords*].

WEDNESDAY 4 MAY—There will be a debate on the Army on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

THURSDAY 5 MAY—There will be a debate on the arts on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

FRIDAY 6 MAY—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 9 MAY—Motion on the draft code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs.

Motion on the Visiting Forces and International Headquarters (Application of Law) (Amendment) Order.

Motion on the International Headquarters and Defence Organisations (Designation and Privileges) (Amendment) Order.

Motion on the Merchant Shipping (Ro-Ro Passenger Ship Survivability) (No. 2) Regulations.

Motion on the Immigration (European Economic Area) Order.

Motion to take note of EC documents Nos. 10166/93 and 11317/93 relating to aid for restructuring the italian steel industry. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motion to take note of EC document No. 6703/88 relating to equal pay and equal treatment (burden of proof). Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Madam Speaker, the House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee A will meet at 10.30 am on Wednesday 4 May to consider European Community document No. 11504/93 proposing a council directive on lorry weights and dimensions.

[Wednesday 4 May:

European Standing Committee A—European Community documents: 11504/93, (Weights and Dimensions of vehicles). Relevant European Legislation Committee Reports: HC 48-x (1993-94) and HC 48-xv (1993-94).

Monday 9 May:

Floor of the House—European Community documents: 10166/93 and 11317/93 state aid to the steel industry. Relevant European Legislation Committee Report: HC 48-iv (1993-94) and European Community document: 6703/88 Burden of Proof (Equal opportunities) Relevant European Legislation Committee Reports: HC 43-xxxiv (1987-88), HC 15-iv (1988-89), HC 15-xxv (1988-89), HC 79-i (1992-93) and HC 48-v (1993-94).]

Mr. Brown: I thank the Leader of the House for his statement and also thank him, although it has taken some robust action from the parliamentary Labour party to secure it, for the belated implicit recognition of wrongdoing in the way in which the Government have trampled on the rights of the House in respect of financial legislation.

Will the Leader of the House now provide time to discuss the Procedure Committee's report on the unified

Budget? Perhaps we could discuss that in the context of the views of a former Conservative Treasury Minister who has remarked:

"As a result of the vigorous efforts of the present Chancellor of the Exchequer and his predecessor, we are now reducing the tax system of this country to a state of total chaos."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 27 April 1994; Vol.554 , c.675.]

Will the Leader of the House also find time for a statement next week from the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the future of social security payments for mortgage interest? It is reported in today's press that the Chancellor plans to abandon social security payments on mortgage interest. The Leader of the House will find it reported just above the headline,

"Curb Portillo 'Treachery' pals tells PM"

and alongside the headline, "Major slaps down Ginny".

May I ask—or invite—the Leader of the House to reopen discussions on the Jopling report with the parliamentary Opposition with a view—[*Interruption.*] —with a view to an early debate on the Floor of the House?

Mr. Newton: I think that I asked you, Madam Speaker, on a previous occasion to confirm whether the use of the word "codswallop" was parliamentary and I think that you allowed me to use it. I wish to apply it again to the opening remarks of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown). Indeed, I noted that he could barely keep a straight face while he uttered his words.

My second point, which inter-relates with two of the other questions that the hon. Member asked, is that we could have been discussing the arrangements for the unified Budget and discussing the Jopling report four months ago, but for the fact that the Opposition stopped discussing anything. Of course, I am willing to engage in discussions, as I have been over the past four months, when the Labour party has not been listening. I simply welcome the return of the Leader of the Opposition to the common sense from which I think—I suspect many of his hon. Friends also think—he should never have departed.

Finally, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security announced in the past year some limit on the amount of mortgage payments that income support would cover and that that limit would be further reduced this month, which is exactly what is happening.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. I should like one brisk question from each hon. Member and a brisk answer, please.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): Will my right hon. Friend review the response that the Prime Minister gave to the question about the citizen advice bureaux report on the Child Support Agency? Is not there some evidence that there is greater hardship to the second family than benefit to the first? Is not there further evidence that we ought to have a fundamental review of the basis on which so-called absent parents' contributions are assessed, rather than tinkering at the edges, as we have so far?

Madam Speaker: Order. That was a perfect example of how not to put a business question. The hon. Gentleman made an interesting statement, but he has not even asked the Leader of the House for a debate on the matters that he has been discussing. I think that the hon. Gentleman is asking for a debate next week on that matter.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful for your guidance, Madam Speaker. While I cannot promise even you a debate on that matter next week, I can make the point that my right hon. Friend has consistently made it clear that he is continuing to keep those matters under close review.

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): Will the Leader of the House guarantee that more time will be made available to debate the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill if the motion of the hon. Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) receives overwhelming support tomorrow? Will he also guarantee that the Government will not sabotage the Bill?

Mr. Newton: As the hon. Lady has rightly observed, there is a debate on that matter tomorrow, but I would not wish to encourage expectation of a departure from the normal procedures of the House in such matters, especially since, in recent Sessions, the Government have consistently invited the House to provide more time for private Members' business than generally provided for by the Standing Orders.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): In view of the relative lightness of the business next week, will my right hon. Friend consider making it possible for the House to have another debate on the important subject of the health service in London, in which it would be possible for Conservative Members to expose the hypocrisy and scaremongering of the Liberal Democrats in talking about hospitals being threatened with closure, such as St. Helier, when there is no truth in the rumour?

Mr. Newton: I suspect that the purpose of that question, dare I say, lay in the last point and I am glad that my hon. Friend managed to get it in. I also hope that he may catch your eye, Madam Speaker, in the debate that is about to take place.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Will the Leader of the House reconsider the answer that he gave me last week, that he could not make time for a debate on the state of social services in Calderdale? Since I made that request, pensioners have contacted me saying that the Tory vice-chair, Mrs. Pat Asquith, is making threatening telephone calls to pensioners who mildly criticised the lack of services and, indeed, has issued a solicitor's letter against one. What is he going to do about the situation in Calderdale? May we have an urgent debate?

Mr. Newton: I say in all seriousness to the hon. Lady that she really cannot expect to make quite serious allegations off the cuff across the Floor of the House and expect me to respond.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): In view of the Foreign Secretary's clearly expressed wish that we should have a debate on Bosnia, why are we not having one next week?

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend made the point, in response to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), that a debate would be easier for him than a series of statements. I do not know that that would necessarily lead to the conclusion that we should have a debate rather than statements when events can be moving quite fast. I know of my hon. Friend's concern about the subject, and he knows that I respect it. I have arranged for

[Mr. Newton]

a debate on the Army on Wednesday next and, clearly, subject to you, Madam Speaker, that will provide a significant opportunity to refer to events in Bosnia.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 771 on the early treatment of cancer patients?

[*That this House, convinced that immediate treatment frequently means the difference between life and death for patients suffering from cancer, calls upon the Secretary of State for Health to implement as a matter of urgency the guidelines laid down by the Joint Council for Clinical Oncology on the waiting times for treatment; further demands that no closures or amalgamations of specialist hospitals like the Royal Marsden, or the Oncology Department of Saint Bartholomew's Hospital, should go ahead until patient need has been fully met; and insists that the Department of Health should investigate hospital waiting times for oncology departments and make that information available to Parliament immediately.*]

Will he find time to debate it next year—next week? Well, I suppose that it would be next year with the present Government. Will he find time to debate the matter very urgently, because many women are dying of ovarian cancer who could be saved if only they were given early treatment and there was some support?

Mr. Newton: While I cannot promise a debate, I can certainly promise to bring those remarks to my right hon. Friend's attention. The hon. Lady will acknowledge, going right back to my own time as Minister for Health, and before, the efforts that the Government have made to secure early diagnosis of cancer patients precisely to tackle such a problem.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the strength of feeling in Deal that the Royal Marines school of music should remain there? Will he find time, possibly during the debate next week, for a statement that it will remain in Deal and that we might even have a combined school of music there as well?

Mr. Newton: It would appear to me that Wednesday's debate on the Army might just possibly provide an opportunity for those points to be aired. But in response to the first part of my hon. Friend's question, I am certainly aware of the concern that is felt in his constituency, as, very rightly, he frequently articulates it.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): In view of the attempts to improve relations by Mr. Ansari, whom some of us know as a serious Iranian chargé d'affaires, could there be some explanation next week about what exactly the right hon. and learned Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, said to him? Could there be some discussion in the House on the very important matter of relations between Britain and Iran?

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will be here to answer questions next Wednesday. If I may, I will draw that question to his attention.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Like me, my right hon. Friend will have read with some concern the reports about illegal immigrants in Southwark and the suggestion that perhaps there has been some connivance with the Southwark Labour-controlled council. That matter was raised in passing with the Prime Minister, but, as it really is a matter of great importance and urgency, will my right hon. Friend arrange for the Home Secretary to look into it and make an early statement to the House next week?

Mr. Newton: I thought that it was raised rather more than in passing with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I am certain, in any event, that, as the matter has been raised in that way, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will wish to look into what has been said.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Given the importance of international events at this stage—I am thinking particularly of the implications of the potential agreements with President Yeltsin's accord in Russia and the conclusion of the South African elections—will it be possible for the Leader of the House to arrange for a debate on foreign affairs, because those issues will have a very important effect on western policies?

Mr. Newton: I always bear such requests in mind. The hon. Lady will have heard many of the other requests that have been made to me; inevitably, there is potential competition. As I have said, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will be here for Question Time next Wednesday.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): My right hon. Friend will have read in *The Daily Telegraph* this week a two-page article about Lloyd's, the future of insurance in the United Kingdom, and the serious years that Lloyd's has ahead of it. *[Interruption.]* In response to the laughter, I should say that I am not involved in that way. However, for the sake of the insurance world, and to keep London as the centre, would it be in order to have a debate next week on the future of Lloyd's and the insurance world?

Mr. Newton: I did note the extensive feature in *The Daily Telegraph*, as I have noted the points made recently by a number of my hon. Friends and, indeed, Opposition Members. But the fact that so much litigation is going on is perhaps some indication of the difficulties of debate.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): May we have a debate next week on safety in transporting children to and from school? The Leader of the House will be aware of the recent tragedy in my constituency where two young boys were killed. There is great anxiety throughout the country that we should move towards making seat belts on school buses compulsory. May we have a debate next week? If not, can the Leader of the House assure us that he will discuss the matter with his Cabinet colleagues, and that the Government will bring forward legislation to protect our schoolchildren while travelling to and from school?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman, with his particular and understandable interest in the matter, will know that, following various accidents, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport commissioned a full review of the technical and cost implications of fitting seat belts in such buses and, indeed, minibuses and coaches generally. The review is nearing completion and my right hon. Friend hopes to publish the conclusion shortly. I think that that will be the time to consider the points raised by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): My right hon. Friend will be aware that the G7 summit in Tokyo last September delegated the responsibility for coming up with a policy to cope with the world population explosion to the UN conference that is due to take place in Cairo this September. May it not be appropriate to have a debate in the coming weeks while the British Government are formulating their policy?

Mr. Newton: I will certainly give consideration to that. But, as I have said once before, there is obviously a lot of competition for such time as might be available.

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): In view of the continuing decline in jobs in manufacturing and the disproportionate level of national resources which goes into support for the arms industry, as indicated by the statements of the President of the Board of Trade in a speech to the House last month when he proudly announced that £10 billion of taxpayers' money had been used to support military equipment development, which pales into insignificance when compared to the level of support for civilian manufacturing industry, will the Leader of the House find time soon to discuss early-day motion 1100 on civilian manufacturing and the arms industry?

[*That this House believes that the proportion of the United Kingdom's manufacturing base formed by arms manufacture is worryingly large, that the opportunity cost to the civilian economy of the arms industry is high and that, while a huge percentage of national research effort still goes on weaponry and highly skilled technicians are deployed in the defence industry, the chances of rivalling the Japanese or Germans in civilian exports are depleted at a time when vast new markets are opening in the East; and calls on the President of the Board of Trade to appoint a working party to look strategically at the future of the arms' trade and its place in the economy.*]

Incidentally, that has all-party support.

Mr. Newton: I must take issue with the thrust of some of the hon. Lady's remarks drawing such a clear distinction between different forms of manufacturing. As everyone well knows, the plain fact is that much that was originally manufactured for military or defence purposes has substantial civilian spin-offs and produces new opportunities for manufacturing of all kinds. It is a silly distinction that the hon. Lady sought to make. As she will know, my right hon. Friend is working on a substantial White Paper on competitiveness. That will contain much that will carry forward the Government's policies, which have been securing the manufacturing base in this country.

Mrs. Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham): The Leader of the House is aware that on many occasions I have called for a debate on safety in coaches, long before the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) intervened. In the light of my right hon. Friend's reply that he may be able to consider a debate following the review, may I urge him to do so, especially in the light of the evidence that has been given to the inquiry in Dover into the M2 coach crash where the coach speed limiter appears to have been disconnected? May we have a debate on the whole issue of coach safety, including the speeds at which they travel and the lanes in which they travel on our motorways?

Mr. Newton: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend's assiduousness in raising those matters over a long period of time. That said, I cannot add to what I said earlier. Of course, I will bear in mind her support for such a debate.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a debate on river pollution? Did he see the report this week that the National Rivers Authority said that the River Dee Lea is the worst polluted river in Europe? Two years ago, the authority said that the river was contaminated with dioxin to 1,000 times above the safety level. When will the Government make a statement and say that they are going to clean up that river and all the others that need cleaning in Britain?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman knows well the importance that my right hon. Friends attach to such matters. I cannot promise him a statement on that matter, but I can promise to bring his remarks to my right hon. Friends' attention.

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): Can my right hon. Friend allow time next week for the House to debate the decision of a Committee of the House to ban the press from the Terrace Bar? There was no consultation with ordinary hon. Members like myself before that was done and it puts this place in a very bad light.

Mr. Newton: As I think that you are well aware, Madam Speaker, that is not strictly a matter for me, but it was done on the basis of very strong advice from the Select Committees on Administration and on Catering. The appropriate course would be for my hon. Friend to make his views clear to members of those Committees.

Dr. Joe Hendron (Belfast, West): Bearing in mind the fact that thousands of people in the city of Belfast are living in fear daily, that four people have been murdered during the past few days, that 16 people have had their knees blown in by the Provisional IRA and that the paramilitaries —both the UDA and the Provos—seem to move about at will, can the Leader of the House make time some time next week, or some time soon, for us to discuss security in the city of Belfast?

Mr. Newton: I note that request. We have had several opportunities to speak about Northern Ireland recently—I do not want to underestimate in any way the problems to which the hon. Gentleman adverted—and we have also just had Northern Ireland Question Time, but I will bear the request in mind.

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): Will my right hon. Friend allow us a debate in the near future on the present state of the economy? Given the 14 per cent. rise in construction orders, the recovery in the housing market, low inflation, low interest rates, falling unemployment, rising exports and rising productivity, such a debate would give us a good chance to tell people out there in the real world the real good news.

Mr. Newton: That is another request which I will bear in mind. However, a full day's debate could hardly do better than the crisp and well-ordered way in which my hon. Friend has just drawn the nation's attention to those significant facts.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The Leader of the House will recall that I exposed JHP Training for fraudulent acts and that the matter has been referred to

[Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours]

the police for a full investigation. As I have received letters from people—some anonymous—working in agencies throughout the country, drawing attention to malpractice and, as there have been television programmes and newspaper articles on those matters, may we now have a debate?

Mr. Newton: In view of the inquiries into some of the matters that the hon. Gentleman drew attention to earlier, his request is perhaps a little premature, but I am sure that my right hon. Friends will want to take his further points into account.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): May I associate myself with the request by the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) for a relatively early debate on the early treatment of cancer? I am a patron of the charity that researches into ovarian cancer and I am satisfied, because of the information that I have been given by the people involved in it, that the matter requires an urgent hearing.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who has long taken an interest in those important matters. While I cannot add to what I told the hon. Lady, I will also bring my hon. Friend's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 1099?

[*That this House congratulates the organisers of the Workers' Memorial Day on 28th April to remember those killed, injured or made ill by their work and to seek improvements in health and safety at work; condemns the current proposals by the Government to de-regulate in this area as they ignore the burden on families and friends of those killed and injured and the cost of occupational ill health, estimated as between £10 billion and £15 billion annually; notes that in the past 10 years 13,000 workers in the construction industry have died in so-called accidents on site and that over 3,000 people die of abestos-related diseases every year; calls for strengthened health and safety laws and greater powers of enforcement for the Health and Safety Executive; and calls on the Government and all employers to recognise their responsibility to eliminate all unnecessary deaths, injuries and illness. [R] Relevant registered interest declared.*]

May I also draw his attention to the rally that is taking place outside the House of construction workers commemorating the deaths of 13,000 workers as a result of accidents on building sites during the past 10 years? May we have an early debate on the need for strengthening health and safety regulations that deal with protection at the workplace? May I also have the Government's response to the proposal that the law should recognise the crime of corporate manslaughter for employers who fail to provide adequate protection for their employees?

Mr. Newton: I do not wish to comment off the cuff on the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's question; let me stress, however, that we are all concerned about the number of accidents in the construction industry. We very much hope that—apart from anything else—the proposed new construction regulations will ensure that health and safety are "planned into" construction projects, and will help to reduce the risks that have been shown to exist.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): We have been alerted by the Belizean Government to threats from Guatemala, and we are currently seeing changes in southern Africa and other parts of the world. May we soon have a two-day or possibly three-day debate to discuss foreign policy? That would give many hon. Members an early opportunity to discuss the numerous issues that must have implications for our future defence needs.

Mr. Newton: Again, I appreciate the reasons that have been given, and I will consider my hon. Friend's request. I feel that I should point out, however, that these exchanges began with implicit pressure for further consideration of the proposals of the Jopling report. There appears to me to be some tension between the demands being made for debates and the demands being made for the House to sit less frequently.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Does the Leader of the House accept that a debate on the Army on the eve of the local elections is not an ideal vehicle for the Foreign Secretary to report to the House on the efforts of Her Majesty's Government to resolve the continuing crisis in Bosnia? Will the right hon. Gentleman therefore arrange a full debate in Government time at an early date, so that the Government can account to the House and hon. Members can explain their criticisms of current Government policy?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman—to whose interest in these matters I am very ready to pay tribute—will have heard what I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack). I have always said, however, that I am ready to consider such matters as events develop—and, in particular, to do what the House would in any case rightly demand of me, and arrange statements in relation to significant developments that occur.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): Will my right hon. Friend, as a matter of urgency, rearrange the business between now and next Thursday to allow a debate on early-day motion 1105?

[*That this House deplores the disgraceful smear campaign being waged by the honourable Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill, in other honourable Members' constituencies; regrets that the Right honourable Member for Yeovil has refused a request to dissociate himself from such tawdry electoral tactics; recognises that such behaviour is typical of the Liberal Democrats' hypocrisy; and calls upon the honourable Member either to substantiate his charges, or to retract them.*]

I hope that we can also debate early-day motions 1135 and 1138.

Such a debate would give hon. Members on both sides of the House an opportunity to discuss and expose the sleazy campaigning tactics of the Liberal Democrats, who hijack the emblem of the House, put out leaflets that are totally at variance with the truth and will do anything they can to grub along a street and try to get as many votes as possible, regardless of the different answers that they give to the different people whom they meet on the doorstep.

Mr. Newton: I think that we have all had that experience from time to time with those to whom my hon. Friend refers. I have looked at what you said yesterday,

Madam Speaker, about the use of the Crown portcullis and the royal arms, and also at a copy that someone sent me of the paper that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) has apparently been sending out in Liverpool.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): What does it say?

Mr. Newton: Perhaps it would be unfair for me to answer, in the hon. Gentleman's absence. I have to say, however, that if I had sent the paper out I would find it very difficult to defend.

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): If the Minister for open government continues to refuse to allow a Select Committee to carry out a direct survey of the opinions of civil servants, will the Leader of the House arrange a debate so that that Minister can be called to account for his actions? Will he also make a statement next week on the accountability of Ministers to Select Committees?

Mr. Newton: I will certainly consider the latter point, although I am not entirely sure what the hon. Gentleman has in mind. As for the first part of his question, which concerned attitude surveys, the position is clear: civil servants must not take part in surveys or research projects in their official capacities, even unattributably, if they deal with attitudes or opinions on political matters or matters of policy. As I understand it, there is nothing particularly new about that.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May we have a debate next week on nursery education, with particular application to the Conservative-controlled borough of Ealing, to examine the provision by the present council of 400 more nursery places than its Labour predecessor, with more on the way? There are also proposals for more places in Northolt, where much is needed.

Mr. Newton: With the required degree of ingenuity and your permission, Madam Speaker, my hon. Friend may be able to make those points in the debate on the Education Bill on Tuesday 3 May. Whether or not that proves to be possible, I am glad that my hon. Friend has had the opportunity to draw attention to the undoubted merits of Ealing borough council in that respect.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): May we have a debate on procedure and will the Leader of House, with his responsibility to all hon. Members, lead that debate? Many Conservative Members—they are either new hon. Members or they take rather longer than average to learn things—respond when my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition stands up by saying, "Answer, answer, answer."

We can understand their confusion, but could it be explained to them that it is the Prime Minister's job to answer questions and the Leader of the Opposition's job to ask them? While those positions will be changed in the not-too-distant future, should not Conservative Members be instructed in the basics until that time?

Mr. Newton: This is a bit of an old chestnut from the hon. Gentleman. I hope that he understands that the reaction of my right hon. and hon. Friends stems from what I regard as their understandable frustration at the difficulty in getting Opposition Front-Bench Members to answer any real questions anywhere in the country.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): Has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity to study early-day motion 1057?

[*That this House commends the commitment and dedication of the personnel in the Obscene Publications Branch at New Scotland Yard; recognises their unique national role and expertise in investigating child pornography and paedophile rings; notes the ever-growing complexity and volume of computer pornography with which the branch deals; and calls upon the Home Secretary to ensure that the Commissioner abandons any plan to close the Obscene Publications Branch and that this specialist squad is assured a continuing and strengthened place in the Metropolitan Police on the conclusion of the current restructuring review.*]

The motion deals with the scourge of child pornography and expresses concern at recent reports that the obscene publications branch of the Metropolitan police might be disbanded or dispersed.

While I recognise that the Metropolitan police Commissioner must do as he fit with his own force, may we have a statement next week to reassure the House that, whatever the future of the obscene publications branch is, police action against that vile trade will go on unabated?

Mr. Newton: I am not sure that we would need a debate to establish that. I thought that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary made it extremely clear during our recent proceedings on the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill and, indeed, I made the point during business questions last week, that any adjustment of the police arrangements will be certainly intended to improve, rather than to diminish, police efforts in that area.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): May we have an early debate on the funding of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, which would give hon. Members an opportunity to argue with Ministers about the grotesque cut in funding for this year against a background of the £85 million being spent on tarting up the Foreign and Commonwealth Office?

Mr. Newton: Perhaps the right course for me would be to bring the hon. Gentleman's question to the attention of my right hon. Friends.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): Has my right hon. Friend received a request for the use of an Opposition Supply day to debate the Labour party's proposals to abolish the assisted places scheme? Given that any such proposal would destroy the hopes and aspirations of tens of thousands of children from less well-off families, is not it important that we should have the opportunity to debate it?

Mr. Newton: Unhappily, the chances of getting the Opposition to take a Supply day to do that must be rather slim. My hon. Friend, with a little ingenuity, might squeeze that matter into Tuesday's debate on the Education Bill.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Would the right hon. Gentleman listen to, and respond to, the many requests to discuss a number of issues relevant to foreign affairs, including the urgent need for the House to debate, discuss and tear to pieces the Foreign Affairs Select Committee's report on relations with China which is full of inadequacies and inaccuracies, and which must be discussed before much more damage is done to our relations with that very great country?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman adverted to that latter point last week, and I made some suitably cautious comments at the time. I always listen to the requests that are made, but I accept that I am not always able to respond as people would wish. I genuinely will look at what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): Could my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on the national health service beyond London, particularly in relation to early-day motion 1037?

[*That this House views with contempt the renewed attempts by the Labour Party to spread needless anxiety amongst patients by repeating unfounded scare stories about the National Health Service, and considers this latest attempt, led by the Right honourable Lady, the Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, to be particularly loathsome as it is designed to frighten older people into believing that they will no longer receive the treatment they need; welcomes the fact that, in both the cases used by the Right honourable Lady for Derby South, alternative packages of care were available but notes with regret that she has neither withdrawn her disgraceful allegations or had the decency to apologise to any older people who may initially have believed her; further notes that the NHS reforms continue to bring important improvements to patient care particularly for older people; and welcomes the Government's commitment to the NHS by providing ever increasing resources for a service that will continue to be available on the basis of clinical need regardless of the ability to pay.*]

We could then explore how the NHS reforms have now delivered 116 patients being dealt with this year for every 100 patients dealt with before the reforms were introduced.

Mr. Newton: I acknowledge that those points may not be as widely known as we should like and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for seeking further opportunities to make them known. Should he catch your eye, Madam Speaker, they may be in order during today's debate.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): When may we have a debate on the admission yesterday by the Secretary of State for Social Security that at least 2 million people in Britain will have lost out by taking out personal pensions?

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): He did not say that.

Mr. Flynn: They were bribed and conned by the Government, who introduced those pensions and robbed the national insurance scheme of £3 billion by persuading people to take out personal pensions that will leave them in poverty in their old age. May we debate especially the personal involvement in that legislation of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the House? Would the Leader of the House find his role in that matter difficult to defend?

Mr. Newton: No, I would not, especially given the many millions of people who have clearly benefited from, and appreciate, the opportunities provided by the development of personal pensions.

The hon. Gentleman is becoming a rival to a previous Front-Bench spokesman on that issue, the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), whose persistent overstatement undermined the case that he sought to make.

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): Will the Lord President reconsider his earlier statement on the position in Southwark, in the light of information that the matter has come to light as a result of investigations by that council, which were notified to the Home Office in December? Will he arrange for the Home Secretary to explain to the House why it took him five months and until a week before the local elections before taking any action?

Mr. Newton: I am certainly grateful for that further intelligence. I am glad to say that I do not have to follow, in day-to-day detail, the affairs of the London borough of Southwark, but I shall draw that point, along with the earlier ones, to my right hon. and learned Friend's attention.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Although I welcome an early debate on the Army—while we still have one—would it not be a good idea to discuss specifically those who work in the defence industry? For instance, is the Leader of the House aware that, this morning, the workers at ROF Chorley presented a petition with more than 20,000 signatures? That symbolises not only the concern of workers in the defence industry throughout the country but their disgust at the fact that the Government have no plans to assist people who always came to the country's assistance in an emergency. May we have an early debate so that the Government can abandon their non-intervention policy and pursue a policy of helpful defence diversification?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman's suggestions about the Government's attitude to that matter would not bear the weight that he seeks to give them. The Government are always anxious to be as helpful as they can to people trying to cope with the effects of change. They have done much to build up the country's manufacturing base in various ways.

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 1111?

[*That this House is appalled that the Pembrokeshire National Health Service Trust is making 55 staff redundant immediately and that a further 45 staff may face the sack in the near future; notes that the management has told the honourable Member for Pembroke that these redundancies are a direct result of the Welsh Office refusing to fund a 2.9 per cent. pay rise rightly awarded to nurses, midwives and doctors and that these support-job losses will ultimately have a detrimental effect on the quality of patient care in Pembrokeshire, contradicting the statement made by the Secretary of State for Wales on Monday 25th April that there would be no impact on patient care; and therefore calls on the Secretary of State to ensure the House is not misled and to fund the 2.9 per cent. pay rise throughout Wales to prevent mass redundancies throughout the NHS in Wales and to prevent any deterioration in the standard of care received by patients.*]

It deals with the proposed 100 redundancies at the Pembrokeshire national health service trust. There is a contradiction between what the management of the NHS trust says will be the impact on patient care and what the Secretary of State told me in answer to an oral question on Monday. May we have a debate not just about the Pembrokeshire NHS trust and its impact on patient care but about the position throughout Wales and the fact that the Welsh Office has not funded the 2.9 per cent. pay rise that was rightly awarded to nurses, doctors and midwives?

Mr. Newton: In accepting fully the recommendations of the pay review body, the Government have always looked to the national health service to fund those pay increases through improvements in efficiency and productivity so that the extra money announced for the NHS as a whole can go directly into patient services. The reductions in staffing levels are a matter for the trust, and the trust's priority remains to sustain high-quality patient services.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Recognising the loss incurred by thousands of pensioners in the former Belling pension fund as a result of the fraud committed by the former Belling directors, will the Leader of the House urge the Secretary of State to tell the House that his Department will give maximum assistance to such pensioners to minimise their loss, resolve the problem and ensure that such frauds can never be repeated?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman knows of the action that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State took to assist Maxwell pensioners, especially in the early stages before so much was done to recover the money. He also commissioned the Goode report, which he is now examining with a view to bringing forward proposals. I do not think that my right hon. Friend can be accused of anything other than having taken the problems seriously.

Points of Order

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I wish to return to a familiar problem in relation to Northern Ireland questions. As you know, security in Northern Ireland is probably the most important issue for the people of Northern Ireland, especially as there have been eight murders in the past week. Unfortunately, due to the order and run of questions today, no hon. Members on this Bench—we represent the largest party in Northern Ireland—had the opportunity to comment on the situation.

It is particularly unfortunate as certain parties in Northern Ireland allege that there is a selective condemnation of events, and silence from this Bench will be seen by them as a lack of concern for some of those atrocious murders. Might it be possible to look yet again at the way in which questions are selected to ensure that Northern Ireland Members are given a fair opportunity?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members on the hon. Gentleman's Bench might like to table substantive questions on the issue that he has just raised. Looking at the Order Paper, I see that five Members on his Bench were called on the first seven questions.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I wish to ask you for your advice. You will have heard a few moments ago the Leader of the House refer to a paper that has apparently been issued by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton). The Leader of the House went on to criticise that document severely. Would it be in order for me to table a question to the Leader of the House in his capacity as Lord President of the Council asking him to place a copy of the document in the Library so that all hon. Members can form a judgment on its content?

Madam Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman wants procedural advice he should not ask the Chair. If he wants to table a parliamentary question, he can seek the advice of the Table Office.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I raise this point of order merely to ensure that no mistake occurs in the *Official Report* in relation to the question that I asked a few moments ago of the Leader of the House. I was not referring to the Maxwell pension fund, but to Belling—a quite different matter.

Mr. Newton: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I apologise to the hon. Gentleman if I misheard and misunderstood the case to which he referred, and then responded according to that misunderstanding. I will ensure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State sees the comments of the hon. Gentleman and responds to them.

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it in order for an hon. Member to be named without being previously informed—I refer to my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton)?

Madam Speaker: When there is an opportunity, it is customary and courteous to inform the hon. Member to whom reference is to be made. As the House knows, I deprecate references to hon. Members if they have not been notified and the reference to them is intended.

Opposition Day

[11TH ALLOTTED DAY]

National Health Service (London)

Madam Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

4.13 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I beg to move,

That this House condemns the policies of Her Majesty's Government which are undermining the capacity of London's health service to care properly for all patients both from London and outside, to provide satisfactory training opportunities for doctors and nurses, to secure reasonable working conditions and job prospects for staff or to make adequate provision for research into improved care for patients and the promotion of good health.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. We are about to embark on a debate on the health of Londoners—a matter of great complexity—on an Opposition motion. How is it, then, that today's debate is to be led by the Opposition spokesman on transport? Surely that is an affront, and deeply offensive to Londoners.

Madam Speaker: As the hon. Gentleman is fully aware, that is not a matter for me, but it is an issue which could be raised in the debate.

Mr. Dobson: I start by declaring an interest. My family and I use our local hospitals. Our three children were born at the Middlesex hospital. They have since received accident and emergency treatment and in-patient treatment at University College hospital. One has received treatment at Great Ormond Street hospital. My wife has had both minor and major operations at the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson hospital, and I have been treated for minor injuries at both the Middlesex and UCH hospitals.

We have been fortunate in the care provided by our general practitioner at the Covent Garden medical centre, by health visitors and by the schools health service. We have been well served by the national health service in our area, and we want to see the same standard of service continue for everyone.

All is not well with the health service in London—not even Ministers can deny that. Never since the establishment of the national health service have Londoners been so concerned about what is happening to their health service, and they are right to be concerned.

The ambulance service is not working.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dobson: I will give way, but I should warn hon. Members opposite that, on the last occasion that I opened an Opposition day debate about health, every Tory who intervened during my speech, bar one, lost his seat in the subsequent election.

Mr. Burns: I am extremely grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that warning. The day the Labour party wins my seat is the day that pigs fly.

Will the hon. Gentleman consider for one moment that, given the increase in spending on the health service, his party may be partly to blame for Londoners' concerns about health, because his party spends day after day maliciously running down the tremendous work of nurses and doctors and improved medical care in London?

Mr. Dobson: All I can say is that if the hon. Gentleman thinks that our campaigning and propaganda is so effective that we alone have managed to stir up Londoners, I hope that we are equally successful in every other sphere.

The ambulance service in London is not working properly. Hospital beds are being closed and whole hospitals are threatened with closure. Newly built wards are being kept empty and staff have been told to hold back on operations so as not to exceed their budgets. Doctors and nurses are made redundant, while hospital waiting lists are the longest ever recorded.

Scarcely a day goes by without reports—which appear frequently in the *Evening Standard*—of patients turned away from hospital, of people who cannot get out-patient appointments, of sick patients left waiting on trolleys all night because beds cannot be found, of elderly patients lost in a hospital, and of the ambulance service in chaos because its computerised command system does not work.

Health Ministers have a range of responses to these problems: "It didn't happen," "It's all scaremongering," or "It did happen and we are very concerned, but it's someone else's fault and we'll set up an inquiry."

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dobson: I will continue for a moment.

Only a few days before the total collapse of the London ambulance service's computer system, Health Ministers were telling the House that the problem was a behavioural matter with the staff rather than a technical matter with the computer. They said that an inquiry would serve no purpose. Five days later, the system collapsed and they had to set up an inquiry.

Never once have Ministers accepted any responsibility for what has happened to the health system. They have never once said that they got it wrong and that they are sorry. They pretend to a day-to-day infallibility which the Pope does not claim. Worse than that, they say that London is getting more than its fair share of health service resources, and that they will have to be cut.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dobson: I will make a little progress first, if the hon. Gentleman does not mind—he should bear in mind my warning.

We must not blame the Secretary of State for the situation. The crisis in London's health service is a product of policies supported by the whole Cabinet. The Secretary of State has inherited policies originally introduced by the present Chancellor of the Exchequer. She has been left to pursue her search and destroy operation against London's hospitals—an operation which is the inevitable consequence of unleashing market forces inside the national health service at the same time as restricting the funds made available to would-be purchasers in the market. She has also had to try to reconcile the long-term strategic health care needs of Londoners with the—inevitably short-term—operations of that market.

I offer the House an example from my constituency. University College hospital and the Middlesex hospital are

to be merged—that is quite right—and so are their medical schools. The total number of hospital beds in my area has been halved in the past dozen years, from over 2,000 to just over 1,000. This is a costly process and, until it has been completed and things settle down, costs inevitably will remain high.

The Secretary of State has said that, for strategic reasons, because its location offers such ease of access from all directions, the UCH accident and emergency department must be kept. The undergraduate medical school is rated the best in the country. The Government's specialty and research reviews give UCH top ratings, so anyone might reasonably expect the hospital to be safe.

The hospital is not safe, however, because the underfunded local health authority says that, to save money, it will have to send its patients for cheaper treatment further afield—in clear breach of the promises made by the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) in 1990 about the right of GPs and patients to choose where the latter are treated, and about patients not being forced to travel further for treatment.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Dobson: I give way to the hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith), who I believe represents a London seat.

Mr. Duncan Smith: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman could get us off on the right track, first by telling the House how much is spent per patient in London, and secondly, if Labour ever came to power, how much more per head would be spent.

Mr. Dobson: If the hon. Gentleman bides his time, he will hear some comparative figures for hospital spending in London and elsewhere.

The Government claim that London is over-provided with hospitals, so they propose more bed closures and hospital closures in London on top of those that they have forced through already. They say that this will not harm patients: that they are improving primary care instead. Let us examine those claims.

Does London get more funding than it is entitled to? The answer is no—not if we make allowance not just for the size of London's population but for the health needs of the population served by London's health services. For a start, London provides services—often the most expensive—for large numbers of patients from outside the capital. About 120,000 patients a year—10 per cent. of all patients treated in London district hospitals, and almost a third of those treated by special health authorities—come to London.

London has nearly 7 million people, 15 per cent. of the population of England. It has 1.1 million pensioners and about 1 million people who are poor enough to qualify for income support or family credit. In recent times, London's unemployment rate has been higher than the national average. Indeed, inner London has double the national average unemployment rate, twice as many one-parent families and three times as much overcrowding and poor housing.

Inner London's mortality rate is 25 per cent. above the English average. Three quarters of all AIDS cases are to be found in the Thames region, most of them in London. Almost the same figure applies for reported HIV infections. About one third of all drug addicts notified to the police are in London, and there are more than twice as many of them, per million people, as there are in the rest of the country.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher) *rose—*

Mr. Dobson: I am trying to answer the question I have been asked.

Last year, the Secretary of State said:

"We spend some 20 per cent. more per head in London than elsewhere."

That is not true, if London is compared with other big cities, and in the case of family health services it is just not true at all. Average spending per patient on family health services in England is £132 a year; in London, it is only £124.

Comparing total health spending per head in London with spending in other big cities, London, on £584 per person, comes after Manchester, on £791, Newcastle on £649 and Liverpool on £629. Those figures must be right; they were provided in an answer by the Minister who is replying to the debate. But that is not the whole story. Almost everything is more expensive to provide in London because of land prices, rents and London weighting of pay.

For example, policing in London is the sole responsibility of the Home Secretary; he is the police authority for London. London, with 15 per cent. of the population of England, gets 29 per cent. of the total spent on policing the whole of England. If the cost of the NHS in London in terms of land prices, rents and London weighting were similar to that of the Metropolitan police, the NHS in London could expect almost one third of the national total; but it does not get it.

Present figures suggest that London's share has fallen below 17 per cent. Today, the King's Fund, which has taken a hand in helping along the Government's rundown of health services in London, said that London merits a larger, not a smaller, share of the national cake. It suggests the sum of around £200 million.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Ian Taylor: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Would it not be in order, when some of us who seek to intervene have constituents in and around London, for the hon. Gentleman to give way so that we can get some common sense to him?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): The hon. Gentleman knows full well that it is not a point of order for me, but a matter for the hon. Gentleman who is speaking.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Dobson: Since they came to power, the Government have relentlessly based their policies on the belief that London is overprovided. In 1979, there were 31,376 acute hospital beds in London. Today, there are just 17,181—a drop of 45 per cent. It is a truly gigantic reduction, yet Ministers claim this has not harmed patient care. That is difficult to reconcile with the fact that, over the same period, the waiting list for London hospitals has increased from 104,000 to 165,000, despite various administrative efforts to stop people getting on the waiting lists, and various administrative culls for those already on them.

[Mr. Dobson]

More than 75 hospitals in London have already closed; 16 or 19 more are threatened, including Guy's and Bart's, University College hospital, Middlesex hospital, the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson hospital for women, Hammersmith hospital, Charing Cross hospital, Edgware general hospital, Barnet general hospital, Oldchurch, Queen Mary's Roehampton, Dulwich and Hither Green. I do not have time to name them all, not even the others in my constituency.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for an hon. Member to suggest that a hospital is to be closed when it has been made quite clear that that hospital will not be closed?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again, the hon. Gentleman knows the answer to that. The hon. Gentleman who has the floor is responsible for his own speech.

Mr. Dobson: In the past four years, one in five of London's accident and emergency units have been closed. Now accident and emergency services are threatened at Bart's and Guy's, St. Andrew's hospital at Bow, Harold Wood hospital, Queen Mary's Roehampton and the West Middlesex hospital.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Dobson: My hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Ms Jowell) made a series of visits to accident and emergency departments. She has been told by the staff that things are getting worse, and what they need most is better access to in-patient beds.

Everyone has heard of patients being kept on trolleys all night, but at Bart's last December, they did not just run out of beds: they ran out of trolleys. They had to dump an unconscious man on a mattress on the floor. On another occasion, to provide an intensive care bed for man brought in with gunshot wounds, Bart's had to unyoke an existing patient from his life-support machine and, because there were no beds at Bart's, he was transferred by ambulance to the Homerton hospital.

That is just one accident and emergency department, but such incidents are taking place all over the place. Some people dismiss these stories as anecdotes, but London knows that it is really happening.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Dobson: I shall give way to the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin).

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): I remind the hon. Gentleman that it was the last Labour Government who set up a working party to look into resource allocation, thus recognising that London had become over-provided. It may be that London is over-hospitalled, and we agree that it is under-resourced for general practices. But what are the hon. Gentleman's policies? He seems to be advocating the provision of mountains of extra cash for the health service in London. It is—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions are supposed to be brief. This is an emotional debate, but Members on all sides will get a fair hearing. If it is obvious that an hon. Member is not prepared to give way, others must resume their seats.

Mr. Dobson: Then there is the deplorable state of the London ambulance service, which is by far the worst in Britain, falling far short of its performance targets. Ninety-five per cent. of 999 calls should be responded to within three minutes; in London, that is managed in only one third of cases. Half of all emergency ambulances should arrive within eight minutes; in London the proportion is only one in eight. Ninety-five per cent. should arrive in 14 minutes; in London this is managed in only two thirds of cases.

Let us be clear about the fact that people suffer as a result of these slow responses. Some suffer avoidable permanent pain or disability. Others die while waiting for an ambulance, while on the way to hospital or after arrival.

The Government say that all this rundown is necessary and just, and that it enables them to invest more in primary care. It is clear that more funds are needed for primary care in London, which, according to the Government's own figures, is under-funded compared with the rest of the country.

There are two flaws in the Government's argument. The first is that, in the period during which they have been claiming to shift funds into primary care, the number of general practitioners in London has actually gone down —and so, we believe, have the numbers of health visitors and district nurses. There has, however, been a 32 per cent. increase in the number of managers in the zones specially targeted for more funds.

The other fault lies in the Government's argument that more investment in primary care will reduce demand for hospital care. There is no evidence to back this claim. Indeed, common sense suggests quite the reverse. If more people can see a doctor, more are likely to be referred for treatment in hospital.

The idea of reducing the number of hospital beds in London to help general practitioners is not supported by GPs themselves. A poll of London's GPs showed that two thirds of them believe that the Government's proposals for health care in the capital will be detrimental to their patients. One third called for more funding for hospitals to increase the availability of beds, thereby enabling them to improve the quality of care for their patients. Like accident and emergency staff, they saw bed shortages as a major problem.

How can all this be going on if, as the Government claim, they are putting more funds into the NHS? For a start, the increase in London has been less than one third of the notional increase in the rest of the country. But that is only part of the story. So much NHS funding is now being wasted. Vast amounts are consumed, to no one's benefit, by the new bureaucracy needed to implement the Government's reforms.

In the four Thames regions, while the number of nurses has been reduced by 5,000, the number of management staff has risen by 5,700—nurses down by 5 per cent., managers up by 16 per cent; and managers are paid a great deal more than nurses.

This sort of change is an inevitable consequence of the new way of running the health service. Everyone predicted that it would lead to more bureaucracy, more paper pushing, more billing and debt collecting—and it has. As a result, the proportion of NHS funds spent on

administration now exceeds 10 per cent. Ten years ago, predecessors of the current Ministers boasted that the figure was under 5 per cent. What a brilliant reform: doubling the spending on paperwork.

But this is not the only waste of money that has developed under the Conservative Government. Hundreds of millions of pounds has been spent on management consultants, public relations consultants, lobbyists—a whole rag-bag of Porsche drivers receiving outdoor relief at the expense of the patients.

Just recently, timed to coincide with the local elections, the Secretary of State issued a misleading leaflet about the health service in London. It has cost the taxpayer more than £250,000, and that amount should really be included in the election expenses of every Tory candidate in London. However, it is such a stupid leaflet that it probably did more harm than good. On top of that, the Department of Health now employs a good news unit, which spends its time plaintively ringing health authorities and trusts asking them to come up with good news on the NHS which Ministers can use.

Can the Secretary of State tell us what the people in that unit will be doing during the local and Euro-elections? Have they been redeployed into useful work, or are they still deployed producing good news stories for Ministers during the election period? I will give way to the right hon. Lady if she wants to tell the House about that. In parallel with that effort to promote favourable stories, the Government have tried to gag people working in the NHS to stop them revealing what is going on.

Another problem for the Government arises from their curious abandonment of the basic ideas at the heart of conservatism—with a small c. A real Conservative believes in letting well alone, not going for change unless the benefits of the outcome of that change would clearly exceed the bother and expense involved in the process. The Government's approach to the NHS, with its endless changes, owes more to the theories of Trotsky on permanent revolution or Chairman Mao on the cultural revolution than ever it did to Edmund Burke or Adam Smith.

The constant process of change in the NHS consumes an enormous amount of money, time and effort among those who are involved. It distracts them from doing their job of looking after patients, and consumes funds which could be spent on patient care.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Dobson: I shall certainly not give way to hon. Members who will raise spurious points of order, so that rules out a fair number, but I shall give way to the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes).

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): I have a simple question for the hon. Gentleman. Why on earth is he here? Is it to paper over the cracks because the Labour party has no policy at all on health, or is it because the Leader of the Opposition has no confidence whatever in the shadow spokesman on health? It is clear that the national health service would not be safe in the hands of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett).

Mr. Dobson: It seems that spurious interventions have succeeded spurious points of order.

I have spoken about wasting funds, and I shall give an example from my constituency. University College hospital is on a good site, with the best possible access for emergencies, as the Secretary of State has confirmed. Over the past decade, under Government pressure, the hospital management has been forced to investigate the possibility of moving to no fewer than 12 sites, ranging from: on top of Euston station, to next to Great Ormond street, to Camden lock, and to knocking over Elizabeth Garrett Anderson hospital and building UCH there instead.

Money was spent on advice from consultants, architects, engineers and God knows who else, but no one has come up with an idea better than leaving UCH where it is. All that has cost a fortune, and it is the sort of thing that has been going on all over London. It is another terrible waste.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dobson: Not at the moment, but I shall shortly give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Of course, there is a fatal flaw at the heart of the Government's changes to the NHS: the introduction of what they call an internal market. That is based on the absurd proposition that health care is unique and that what is cheapest will also be the best. That is not true of a pair of shoes, a pair of jeans or a hotel.

If we decide to buy a cheap pair of shoes, we know that they will not be the best pair of shoes, but the Government want health authorities to place contracts with the cheapest hospitals rather than with the more expensive ones. But, as everybody knows, in many cases the more expensive hospitals provide better treatment. Heart bypass operations at one London teaching hospital may involve the death of one patient in 100. At other hospitals the death rate may be as high as four or five patients in 100, and the same applies in other specialties.

What right have Ministers and accountants to intervene and send patients to hospitals that are not the first choice of either the patient or the GP, and which both know are not as good? That also breaks another promise made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1990.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, in 1987, the then Labour-controlled Ealing council put up rates on Ealing hospital by £330,000? That could have provided a lot of treatment for my constituents and the people of Ealing, but the council did not care. What does the hon. Gentleman think? He does not care either, when it really comes to it.

Mr. Dobson: Apparently, we have the self-answering question from the hon. Gentleman. If he wants to talk about Ealing, he might bear in mind for a moment the fact that hospital staff living in council houses have seen their rents double; they are now paying the highest rents in Britain.

But that is not the only problem that results from making hopitals compete for patients. At one time, all the institutions in the NHS used to work together for the benefit of patients. There were some silly rivalries, but they were on the periphery. Today, competition is at the heart of relationships within the NHS. Again, I want to illustrate that with an example from my area.

Following changes in the way that funds are allocated, the Bloomsbury and Islington health authority is set to lose a lot of its funding. All the local NHS managers are agreed on that—at the health authority, the family health services

[Mr. Dobson]

authority, University College hospital and the Middlesex, the Royal Free, the Whittington and Elizabeth Garrett Anderson hospital.

Together with my hon. Friends the Members for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) and for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), I met various managers to discuss the problem. We suggested that all concerned should get together to make representations to the Secretary of State. But the response was, "Oh, there's no chance of that. It's dog eat dog now in the NHS"—dog eat dog, in what used to be a national health service.

Supporters of the Government's policies can come out with all sorts of management blather about performance indicators and the like, but the instincts of Londoners are sound. They like their local hospitals. They take pride in the great teaching hospitals that have successfully combined service to local people with training doctors and nurses, and research and developments in treatment that have made them famous around the world.

Londoners are proud of London's hospitals, be it the Royal Free, the first free hospital, originally the London general institution for the gratuitous care of malignant diseases, or the Royal Marsden, the first to provide free cancer treatment for poor people, or the Brompton, the first to admit poor people suffering from tuberculosis.

Some time ago, when defending her efforts to close Bart's, the Secretary of State said that she was not responsible for the national heritage. Well, Londoners think that she is. Bart's was founded in the year 1123. It is part of our national heritage. It has been doing something useful for London for more than 800 years. It has been there longer than there has been a Parliament.

Bart's had been open for 400 years before Tyndale's English bible was first published. The Secretary of State may not want to do so now, but will she, in the quiet watches of the night, ponder whether she, who has not held her office for 800 days, should wipe out a hospital that has served Londoners well for 800 years?

This is make or break time for London's health services. Hospitals once closed will be hard, if not impossible, to reopen. Expert operating theatre teams once dispersed would be difficult, if not impossible, to bring back. Therefore, I implore the Secretary of State to go back to the Cabinet and to say, "We've got it wrong. We need to look at this again. We've got to make a fresh start. We must put the interests of Londoners before the interests of bureaucrats."

If the Secretary of State will not do that, Londoners will never forgive her. That is why Labour is calling for a freeze on all bed and hospital closures, and a genuine and open review of what must be done. Londoners need a health care system fit to meet the challenge of the 21st century, and the cuts must stop before it is too late.

4.44 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'noting the rapid advance of medical science, population migration from Inner London and the increase in provision of specialist services outside the Capital, believes that the National Health Service must respond to these changes; congratulates the first government in 100 years prepared to tackle these issues; believes that the Government's long-term programme of strategic change is already leading to better services for patients, especially better primary care, and will strengthen centres of excellence in teaching and research and lead to a more sensible use of resources; and condemns her Majesty's Opposition for cynically treating the National Health Service in London as a party political battleground regardless of the interests of either staff or patients.'.

If ever there was a case for the pamphlet that we have produced on the NHS changes in London, the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has just made it, although I fear that it must have been too complicated for him because his total ignorance, lack of understanding and deplorable, mischievous statements show that he needs an intensive programme of training and education. All that he could do in the end was to call for a 21st report into the problems of London—the 21st in the last 80 years.

The changes that confront the health service in London are necessary if patient services are to be improved. The changes are complex. They involve not just the health service but medical education and research, and they are long overdue. They do not lend themselves to the sort of soundbite cynicism that we have just heard from the hon. Gentleman.

Londoners deserve to know about the changes and why they have to happen. They do not need Labour's rants, riddled with inaccuracies, distortions and error. The hon. Gentleman's speech was typical of the Labour party's style. Labour Members provoke fear rather than inspire understanding; they are not interested in running the health service only in running it down; they are long on rhetoric, short on fact and devoid of understanding.

The hon. Gentleman brought to the debate all the wisdom and insight on health that one would expect from a spokesman on transport. The hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) has been forced to listen from the substitutes' bench. He has been binned in order to give his hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras a bit of pre-election lebensraum.

Earlier this week the hon. Member for Brightside asked about my position. It seems that he has now fled the field. He is the victim of a soft shoe reshuffle. We know, however, what the Labour party is up to. It is not interested in a debate about health; all it wants is a chance to boost its miserable campaign for the London elections. That is why the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras opened the debate. He, after all, is its campaign cheerleader, a job he got, we recall, as a consolation prize for coming second to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) in the beauty contest. That speaks volumes for the Labour party's attitude.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it may well be that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) did not dare put his nose here because he knows perfectly well that the north wants its fair share of resources? He dare not come here and yell that he wants more for London.

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend has it exactly right. What is more, the statements of the hon. Member for Brightside are already far too committed to the need for change so he had to be shuffled off before the debate took place.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice (Lewisham, East): Will the Secretary of State tell the House when she last came to the Dispatch Box voluntarily and initiated a debate on health in London or elsewhere in the country?

Mrs. Bottomley: I should like to know when the hon. Lady last spoke to the House about the £25 million going into her local hospital. Somehow, Lewisham hospital is not mentioned in the House. That hospital is receiving enormous investment and showing great change and improvement.

Ms Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): Can the Secretary of State tell my constituents and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Ms Prentice) how their health services are to be improved as she suggests when the hospital on which many of them depend, Guy's, is to lose a minimum of 400 beds which are currently in use, and an accident and emergency department, and why at Lewisham hospital her accountants have created a situation whereby there are to be 70 compulsory redundancies, and highly skilled nurses are to be replaced by care assistants?

Mrs. Bottomley: The Labour party wilfully chooses to fail to consider the whole point because it considers only institutions. In the constituency of the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock), in Southwark, Lambeth and in Lewisham, there are 200 primary care projects going ahead in the next five years. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has 72 general practitioners in his constituency. Did we hear about the deprivation payments that they now receive—up to £30,000 for each GP in the hon. Gentleman's constituency? No, because, he, like the rest of the Labour party, voted against the new GP contracts. Did we hear that now 90 per cent. of children are immunised in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, as in the constituency of the hon. Member for Deptford? That figure used to be 70 per cent. before the new GP contracts and the Labour party voted against it. The Labour party is so obsessed with institutions because they are centres of the health unions. Every one of the Opposition health spokesmen is sponsored by one of the health trade unions. They do not want to undermine their power base. They do not speak for patients. They speak for the provider interests.

I must say that change is necessary in London and I hope to set out in greater length why that change is necessary. The outrage—

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair hopes to be able to hear what the Secretary of State has to say—*[Interruption.]* Order. I address my remarks to both sides of the House.

Mrs. Bottomley: I suspect that I have already given way a great deal more than the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras. It is my natural instinct, when seeing such a blinkered ignorance, to wish to respond, but I understand that many Conservative Members are impatient for change, recognise the need for it and want to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The debate is of great importance to London and to Londoners. Instead of a bona fide health spokesman, we get the performing political monkey. It insults Londoners, it insults their health service and it insults everyone working in that health service. So did the shameless behaviour of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), who wished to visit Bart's this morning, did not even have the courtesy to inform the local Member of Parliament, then wished only to go if he could go in a media circus. [*Interruption.*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The House must settle down.

Mrs. Bottomley: It is the last Opposition day debate before the local elections. Those local elections concern housing, education, social services and transport. What does the Labour party choose to speak about? It chooses to speak not about the subject of those local elections—the fact is that it wants to conceal the performance of its local councillors—but about a subject which it always tries to wheel out every time it wants to raise its profile: exploiting the health service and wilfully misrepresenting the situation.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Like Jennifer's ear.

Mrs. Bottomley: Like Jennifer's ear, as so many of my hon. Friends have said. The Labour party does not have a policy for the NHS in London that goes beyond next Thursday. Labour Members do not understand that Governments must measure their responsibilities in years and decades. Government responsibility is to patients and to the NHS staff who work for patients. Our responsibility to patients means that we have to look to health care in the future, rather than preserving, unchanged, every institution that has served us in the past. Our responsibility to staff means that we have to explain to them the need for change and help them to meet it. We have to reduce pressure on staff. No Government have done more than this one to reduce the unacceptably long hours worked by junior hospital doctors, ably helped by leaders of the Junior Hospital Doctors organisation from time to time and on which we have now spent £115 million. We have set up a clearing house to help staff in London who are affected by the changes to get new jobs.

First and foremost, our commitment must be to patients and I give an absolute commitment that services in London will change only for the better. Patients will receive more care, better care and closer to their homes. Professional staff will have the chance to respond to change, to provide care in different settings and to work in the NHS of the future. The health of London and of Londoners will steadily continue to improve.

Anyone who has studied those matters in detail—it is already clear that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras has seen very little and studied very little—knows that some of the needs for change go back 100 years. The hon. Gentleman and others have quoted Professor Jarman of St. Mary's hospital. I shall quote Professor Nick Bosanquet, who said that we must face change. He said:

"London health services may have had a glorious past but their quality in the future depends on our willingness to face up to difficult choices now."

The Labour party has not shown a willingness to face any difficult choice at all.

Mr. Dobson: Just to correct the Secretary the State, I never mentioned Professor Jarman. If the right hon. Lady were to suggest that I have personally opposed changes in health services in my area, that would be a lie, because I was one of the first to suggest the amalgamation of the Middlesex and University College hospitals. When the North East Thames regional health authority said that it was ridiculous to have two regional cancer centres in my

[Mr. Dobson]

constituency, I agreed with it and believed that it was right that they should be transferred elsewhere. In the Labour party, we say yes, there needs to be change in the health service in London, but the changes that the Government are putting forward are the wrong changes.

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman fails to recognise that it is his health authority, in trying to assess the need of the local population, which is so anxious to put more resources not into hospitals but into the community—for example, an extra £500,000 into mental health services. That is why the authority wants to compare the costs of different hospitals, because if it gets better value for treating local patients, it can invest in further care. It is in the hon. Gentleman's constituency that I visited one of the most outstanding centres for people who have been resettled from Friern in Camden road. That is a multi-million pound project. There are a whole range of initiatives to help local people.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): The Secretary of State has a degree in sociology. That is the problem.

Mrs. Bottomley: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's intervention because he rightly says that I have a degree in sociology. I have two degrees in sociology —*[Interruption.]*.

Mr. Sedgemore: That is the problem. *[Laughter.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. May we have a little quiet below the Gangway?

Mrs. Bottomley: It is because I have two degrees in sociology that I believe that the way forward is to assess the local health need, not to allow policy to be dominated by the interest of the institutions—respected and loved though they have been—but to start from the interests of patients, from their health concerns and their social concerns, which Labour Members profess to support. Always, however, they resile from the analysis, they duck the difficult decision and take the populist way forward. They are interested not in patients or in staff but only in buildings.

It is no matter to Labour Members that there are 18 major hospitals in an area of central London where the population has fallen by 1 million in the past 30 years. It is no matter to them that there is duplication and fragmentation of specialist services, which weakens our medical excellence, splitting it between a plethora of different sites. It is no matter to them that GP services across the capital and services for the mentally ill have suffered decades of neglect, while the money has gone to support duplication in central London.

We can agree that there should be more primary care in London, but what the Labour party will not recognise is that if we are to invest more and more in primary care, we have to unlock the resources which are tied up in the battalion of big hospitals in central London.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Before my right hon. Friend gets on to the subject of primary care, does not she agree that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) made her point for her when he pointed out that the cost of providing health care in London is far higher than elsewhere in the country? To go on sucking patients out of constituencies such as mine into London quite unnecessarily is a gross misuse of national health service funds.

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is exactly right. The average cost of a London teaching hospital is 46 per cent. above the cost of a teaching hospital outside London. That money has to be paid, but could otherwise be spent on providing services more cost effectively elsewhere. The Labour party ignores the extra length of stay of patients in London. It also ignores the way in which the population in London has left the centre and gone out to the suburbs. I know that many of my hon. Friends will be pressing to ensure that we make swift progress because they want a fairer distribution of resources. It also ignores the great network of hospitals that has built up around the home counties.

The Labour party not only shows ignorance about all of that, but disregards medical advances. For example, patients who previously had to be treated in hospital, perhaps for several days, even weeks, can now be treated as day cases and there are new diagnostic techniques, even in the community. All that means change. The Labour party may fail to understand that, but why has the number of hospital beds been falling for years in France, Germany the USA—all of which belong to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development? The distribution of resources means a subsidy this year of £105 million, paid to support the hospitals in central London. If we do not act now, that subsidy will increase and will be needed year after year without improving services to patients. As my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Ken (Mr. Rowe) rightly reminded me, it is the constituencies outside London that have to pay that bill.

Of course, that is only part of the picture. The subsidy is also paid for in investment forgone elsewhere in the capital. It could be better spent on more GP services, health centres, community nursing, care in the community and all the other local services that are vital to a comprehensive NHS. The Labour party, in effect, wants to sacrifice primary care to preserve each and every institution for all time. That policy is financially irresponsible and clinically illiterate, and Conservative Members will have nothing to do with it.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I ask the Secretary of State a simple question. Does she accept that the cost of providing public services in the capital, by definition, is higher per capita than elsewhere, because the land cost is higher, salaries are sometimes higher and the incidence of deprivation in the London boroughs is considerably higher than in any other conurbation in the country? Does she accept that health care in London will always cost more and that, unless she is to ship all patients out of London, she will have to find the money for that additional cost?

Mrs. Bottomley: I accept that there are special needs in London; I particularly accept the need to invest in primary care in London. I do not accept, and if the hon. Gentleman is sincere, I doubt whether he does, the need, in the area where his constituency is, for four cardiac units within six miles, each beneath the size recommended by the specialty review. It makes no sense.

Mr. Hughes: Answer the question.

Mrs. Bottomley: I have answered the hon. Gentleman by saying that I accept that there will continue to need to be special support in London, but I am explaining to him, and to the Labour party, why some of the excessive and unnecessary costs in London have been the result of the duplication of specialist centres. One cannot have a cardiac centre at King's, Guy's, St. Thomas's and the Brook. It makes no sense and does not even provide the best research excellence. It certainly does not produce the most cost-effective care. Not only are there four cardiac centres in that small space, but half a dozen are within easy travelling time. Other Conservative Members will be appalled to think that there was such a duplication of cardiac investment, just to take one of a great number of examples, in such a small space. It is not cost-effective or clinically effective, and it undermines the ability to compete internationally in centres of research and teaching.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mrs. Bottomley: In a moment.

The Labour party fails to understand that, as part of those changes, there is also a new £5.3 million cardiothoracic unit at Brighton—the residents used to have to travel all the way to central London for their cardiac care —which is part of the £35 million Royal Sussex hospital. That need for change, so that we have a better balance of specialty services, concentrated in specialty teams, underlines the need for change that has been recognised time and again.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras showed a complete lack of understanding about the way in which health services are funded in London. I do not believe that it was a deliberate misreading of the information. I cannot believe that he saw the parliamentary answers to my hon. Friends the Members for Worcester (Mr. Luff) or for Croydon, North-East (Mr. Congdon). Let me make it clear. Health spending in inner London amounts to £553 per head —46 per cent. above the national average. Including the former special health authorities, spending per head in London is 56 per cent. above the norm. Inner London has more acute beds per person than the rest of the country, twice as many consultants and, as I have said, the costs are much higher—46 per cent. more to be treated in one of the teaching hospitals.

The amount of funding available for the health service will always be finite. The Labour party, which always promises the moon and delivers nothing, should be the first to know. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister reminded the House of its deplorable catalogue when it was in power and responsible for the health service. We have to look to the way in which resources can most effectively be used. We do not resort to the constant denigration of people involved in health service management. To deliver change, support staff and plan buildings requires good management. Leading clinicians should be involved in clinical work. To denigrate one part of the service rather than the other is deplorable.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): I fully understand the logic behind the medical and financial criteria to which my right hon. Friend is referring. However, where a closure is proposed—the proposal might not yet have come to her level, but consultation is taking place—if there are strong social reasons for keeping a hospital open, is it possible that she might overrule financial and medical grounds?

Mrs. Bottomley: In every case, careful consultation takes place, and has to take place. Certainly, it is not only narrow issues of value for money which weigh; it is looking for best value, best clinical outcomes and the interests of patients. Where a population feels very strongly about local provision, that must be strongly considered.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): My right hon. Friend earlier mentioned suburbs. As two thirds of London's population lives in outer London, did she notice that, although the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), the Opposition spokesman on Transport, might know about transport, his sense of geography is a little odd, as he scarcely mentioned outer London at all, and practically the whole of his speech was on inner London? Is she aware that, in my constituency, there are four new GP surgeries, which people are very pleased with, and that people in outer London happen sometimes to fall ill as well and might need some service there, too?

Mrs. Bottomley: I thank my hon. Friend for making that point clearly. He does his homework and understands the situation in his constituency, unlike many other hon. Members.

There has been, rightly and properly, discussion of accident and emergency services. I suppose that a spokesman on transport could be allowed to have views that should be considered when it comes to ambulance services. He failed to remind the House, however, that this year we put an extra £14.8 million into the London ambulance service. That follows the figure of some £7 million for last year. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras is right to say that we have been far from satisfied by the performance that is being achieved by the London ambulance service. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary is, at this moment, with the London ambulance service, on a visit to one of its vehicles, but, unlike the Leader of the Opposition, he did not feel the need to summon up the television cameras to follow him on that visit. He regards it as part of his responsibilities to know what is going on. He does not feel that the visit would be wasted if he does not have a whole television crew pursuing him.

Not only has the extra money resulted in a new fleet with 120 more ambulances. Above all, when it comes to what our constituents need in accident and emergency services, we have gone from 300 to 400 paramedics since about the time of the last local elections in London. Having gone from 300 to 400, we are on line to reach 1,000 paramedics on those London ambulances by 1996.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mrs. Bottomley: Labour are, as ever, enthusiastic about their outrage but they are short on their analysis. Much of the pressure on accident and emergency departments is unnecessary and can be avoided. About half the patients using accident and emergency departments in London have minor injuries. They are not rushed in by an ambulance but walk in off the street, more often than not because the GP service locally needs to be better. I pay tribute to all those nurse-led minor-injury facilities such as the one at St. Charles's hospital which provides excellent, high-quality care and relieves the pressure on local emergency services. Similarly, I welcome all those—

Mr. Spearing: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You may have understood an oral request to the Secretary of State, but as she is so engrossed in her copious notes, I do not know whether she is—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that that is not a point of order.

Mr. Spearing: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mrs. Bottomley: I have had frequent lengthy discussions with the hon. Gentleman, not least on the Thames and on other occasions. I have learnt from experience that if he wishes to make his point, it is wise to let him make it in his own speech if he catches your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The right thing to do is take a considered view of the development of accident and emergency services in London. The London implementation group is advised by Professor Norman Brouse, the president of the Royal College of Surgeons, with a team of experts on accident and emergency services. The Chief Medical Officer is advised by Professor Howard Baderman whom I believe works in the Holborn and St. Pancras constituency.

Mr. Dobson: He does a very fine job, too.

Mrs. Bottomley: I am pleased to hear that he does a fine job. In that case, I suggest that the next time the hon. Gentleman sees him, he listens rather than speaks, and remembers that he has two ears and one mouth because what he will hear from Professor Howard Baderman is that accident and emergency services need to be concentrated in centres of excellence with a back-up facility. The problem at Bart's is that it has such a small accident and emergency unit because the population has so substantially reduced that it becomes ever less viable as a full accident and emergency service. That is the full thinking behind the Government's decisions on the development of services in London.

What discourages me about Labour is its inability ever to look constructively and analytically. Do we ever hear from the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms Harman) or, indeed, the hon. Member for Dulwich (Ms Jowell) about the £8 million being spent on the accident and emergency department at King's College hospital? Do we ever hear about the £40 million to provide 10 new operating theatres and extra intensive care at King's College hospital? Do we ever hear that in the House?

Mr. Dobson *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let us have a bit of order on the Labour Front Bench. *[Interruption.]* Order. The Secretary of State has made it clear that she is not giving way.

Mr. Dobson: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it orderly for the Secretary of State to challenge my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Ms Jowell) to be here and say something when she has just come out of hospital and is at home? She would like to be here but she cannot.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Secretary of State will answer for herself.

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Member for Dulwich, like the hon. Member for Peckham, is swift to embark on a catalogue of often vindictive criticism with a disregard for the facts. Labour is so lamentably slow ever to praise a hospital which is a good hospital and which stands to benefit greatly from the changes in London. Not only King's College hospital but Maudsley hospital stand to benefit from the move of the neurosciences to become a worldwide centre of excellence in neurosciences. However, that is something that Labour Members never mention because it does not suit them, even though it is a substantial investment in their own constituencies, directly benefiting their members.

Similarly, the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice) does not mention the £4.3 million spent on the accident and emergency department and the £23 million development with 200 new beds, two new wards and a new children's unit. How many of my hon. Friends know about the developments of the Lewisham hospitals, which Labour so lamentably fail to recognise? Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that my hon. Friends will want to catch your eye later so they can tell us about the excellence of those services and developments.

Perhaps even more important, I am disappointed that the hon. Members for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) and for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) have failed to join us today. It is sad that when £25 million is being spent at the Homerton hospital—

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I set the record straight? My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) has been here for the whole debate and has just gone to that hospital.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) is on an official delegation to South Africa to monitor the elections there. It should therefore be at least clear—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We now have that on the record.

Mrs. Bottomley: The point is that the constituency of the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington stands to benefit greatly from the enormous investment in Homerton hospital. I appreciate that the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch was here, but he has left the Chamber and has no intention of saying that the beneficiaries of the changes are not the 4,000 resident population of the City but the 190,000 people who live in Hackney. It is when Labour Members—

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Once again, the Secretary of State forgets. My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch has gone to a meeting with all the staff at Bart's, which I understand will last for four hours.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Bottomley: I shall repeat the point.

Mr. Gorst: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I ask you to make it clear that Labour's pairing arrangements have absolutely no part in our proceedings at present?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The debate is not about Labour's pairing arrangements.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have listened to several points of order now. I hope that the hon. Gentleman's point of order is a genuine one. If it is not, I shall take a dim view of it.

Mr. Mackinlay: Oh dear. In that case, I shall sit down.

Mrs. Bottomley: I understand why Labour are so uncomfortable. Their betrayal of the achievements of the health service always corners them. I have visited Homerton hospital.

Mr. Sedgemore: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The House should settle down. If hon. Members stop behaving like schoolchildren, we might be able to get on with the debate.

Mr. Sedgemore: Mr. Deputy Speaker—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As I said to the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) before the hon. Gentleman entered the Chamber, I hope that it is a genuine point of order.

Mr. Sedgemore: I apologise for leaving the debate as I am going over to St. Bartholomew's hospital.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman's apology is accepted.

Mrs. Bottomley: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not leave immediately because I shall repeat what a tremendous service Homerton hospital will be providing for the 190,000 people who live in Hackney, rather than the 4,000 people who live in the City, albeit that there is an important visiting population who work there. About £25 million is going to the Homerton hospital—more than £1 million of it is going to accident and emergency services. I am delighted to have the attention of the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch because I know that he wants to know more about the 26-bed admission ward, the two new acute wards, the new paediatric and outpatient blocks, the CTMRI—computerised tomography magnetic resonance imaging—scanner, the radiology unit, the new pharmacy and the expansion of the special care baby unit.

When I visited Homerton hospital late at night shortly before Christmas, people there were only too pleased that we had taken the principled view that investment should go where the people are. People should not have to travel to buildings; we should take services to the people.

Bart's has developed great excellence, which will be strengthened and consolidated by its merger with the new trust, which is to be made up of Bart's and the Royal London hospital. When one talks to the people involved in the work, who look outward and are involved in developing primary care, one finds that that expertise and those traditions, which go back many centuries, will continue to benefit patients and staff for many generations.

Mr. Tracey: I must underline the excellent argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel). If the people of Hackney and other parts of inner London are ungrateful for the vast extra resources that my right hon. Friend is describing, perhaps she should put those resources in the outer London boroughs of Richmond, Kingston, Croydon, Enfield, Brent, Harrow and Redbridge, where we will thank her for them.

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend tempts me, because allocating resources in a principled way is an unrewarding pursuit when it comes to the Opposition.

On the same lines, we heard nothing from the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras about the Government's commitment to University College hospital in his constituency, which has been given £10 million in transitional funding. I am afraid that that money cannot be spent in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) or in that of any of my other hon. Friends. That hospital will rightly remain a great world centre of teaching, research and treatment.

Did we hear about the 92 primary health care projects, the £12 million being spent in Camden and Islington in the first two years, the Brunswick square and Hunter street developments and the work in the King's Cross area to help homeless people or the local Bangladeshi population? Did we hear about the Crowndale development for general practitioners there, or about their new practice nurses—the number of practice nurses has increased by three times. We did not hear about any of those great achievements or the programme of changes that are under way in the health service in London.

All hon. Members are right to be concerned when things go wrong. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras asked about the people who provide information in the national health service. It is a very large organisation and it is important to have information available. Last week, we heard about the tragedy involving children in a Manchester hospital. People at the centre need to know swiftly and urgently about the state of affairs.

When something goes wrong at an accident and emergency unit, urgent action needs to be taken. I made it clear much earlier this year—when we were worried about unacceptable trolley waits—that NHS management is to improve and that managers must ensure that patients are admitted to, or discharged from, hospital more effectively.

Do the Opposition understand that we can relieve pressure on accident and emergency departments by investing in primary care? Above all, do they criticise local authorities, whose failure to agree proper discharge arrangements with hospitals so often leads to patients staying longer than necessary in hospital? Patients in accident and emergency departments have to wait for beds as a result.

Are the Opposition aware of the fact that when we last had problems at King's College hospital 40 patients were waiting to be discharged? Perhaps they could help me to encourage the local authorities of Lambeth and Southwark to use the extra money that they get for community care to fulfil their commitments to make effective discharge arrangements. The Opposition should concentrate more on that subject in their pre-local election gimmick run.

In London this year, an extra £135 million will be available for community care—77 per cent. above the level of grant last year. I do not recall—I do not know whether my hon. Friends do—the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras mentioning that Camden has had a 100 per cent. increase—£5.3 million—for community care this year. I wonder whether any of my hon. Friends did. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Did my hon. Friends hear about the extra £5 million for community care in Greenwich? Did they

[Mrs. Bottomley]

hear about the £5.4 million for Hackney, the £6 million for Lambeth and the £6 million for Southwark? Did my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State hear about the £6.5 million for Wandsworth? The Opposition should be ensuring that Labour-controlled councils provide the services that they should be providing and that they do so more thoroughly and vigilantly.

All too often, it is Labour's neglect that builds up the pressures on our emergency services. Today, the King's Fund produced another report on the state of the health services in London. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras mentioned one report, but it is hardly worth explaining to him how he misunderstood it. Well over £2 billion is spent on the health service in London. The King's Fund report endorsed the need to spend money on community and not acute services—albeit that the report was discussing how the weighted capitation system works. The report, "Giving Voice to Londoners," is perhaps even more important and I am sure that the Opposition would have quoted if it had suited their partisan needs. It said that Londoners want a combination of well-resourced central hospitals, centres of excellence, more primary care offering minor surgery, specialist clinics, social care and community support. Those are also our policies and they are the right policies.

By pursuing the programme of strategic change that we have put in hand, we shall be able to put an end to uncertainty, and uncertainty is very hard for people working in the health service in London. We shall be able to realise that vision for the health service in London which is set out in the King's Fund report. Baroness Hollis, the noble Friend of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, supported that report. Perhaps when he has compared notes with his party's spokesman on health, he may wish to go for further advice to Baroness Hollis, who played such an important part in presenting the original case.

As the independent specialty reviews last summer recognised, centres of excellence are created by bringing specialist services together and linking them to other hospital care. That is the expert medical view and the view that underpins our approach. We have honoured our commitment to protect the excellence of London's medical research, by providing generous funding for the special health authorities to support their research as they make the transition to trust status.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras rightly referred to the Marsden, Brompton and Great Ormond Street hospitals—those special health authorities of such great standing. They have been very warmly funded. We have been able to bring the medical schools together successfully with the multi-faculty colleges. The hon. Gentleman's motion referred to education, so I was surprised that he failed to recognise the great significance of medical schools becoming part of a wider team with postgraduate centres and the broader scientific base. If we want to continue to have world-renowned doctors, that is an important step forward. That is why, when we propose to concentrate services, we also want to release further investment in research and education. It is not that we will lose some excellent teams. The point is that they will be moved to an environment that better supports their work and improves services for patients. That involves upheaval during the change, but that is not a reason why we should lose those teams or why they should not continue to grow and prosper in a different setting.

Far from destroying centres of excellence, our policies are designed to create, enhance and strengthen them. Indeed, every hospital that the hon. Gentleman mentioned will be combining with other teams. Those hospitals will be stronger, more effective and better able to engage in research and teaching. At the same time, we shall continue to give Londoners the better primary care that they want. That is why we have unleashed a formidable programme of investment to improve premises, build new community services, provide more and better-trained doctors and nurses working in the community and target the vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and mentally ill, who most need that community-based help.

This year, investment in London's primary care has doubled, amounting to more than £85 million. Well over 700 projects are under way, contributing to arrangements in a variety of services.

An Hon. Member: It is all waffle.

Mrs. Bottomley: I find it extraordinary that an hon. Gentleman should mutter "It is all waffle" under his breath. As I have said, 700 projects are under way, all detailed and documented. In my view, that constitutes a clear and substantial investment in change. The amount exceeds what we were asked to provide either by Professor Tomlinson or in the King's Fund report.

We have always been clear about the fact that we could bring about change only when we were able to make such an investment in primary care, and could be sure that change would lead to improvements and a better balance of services. Londoners hear nothing about that from London Labour Members.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mrs. Bottomley: I think that I have given way very much more than the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras. A number of my hon. Friends were desperate to intervene in his speech. I pity him, because his sudden ascension to his current brief must have made it difficult for him to give way. I have tried very hard to be patient with Labour Members, but I am worried about cutting into the time of my hon. Friends.

Mr. Raynsford: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the Secretary of State to complain that she has not heard from Greenwich—as she did earlier—when she has repeatedly refused to give way to me on points directly related to her speech?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Secretary of State's speech is clearly in order; otherwise the Chair would have ruled it out of order.

Mrs. Bottomley: I have offered Labour Members an agenda, Mr. Deputy Speaker, suggesting some items that they might wish to raise if they are fortunate enough to catch your eye. I thought it only fair that, in the unlikely event of their again failing to recognise the great achievements of the health service and what is happening in their own constituencies, London residents should hear about some of the major investment that is taking place in the capital. I believe that, as this great raft of investment

and projects becomes ever more public and visible, the Labour party's distorted, one-sided picture of the NHS in London will be exposed for what it is.

In 1992, the King's Fund report pointed to the need for fundamental change in London's health service, stating:

"Action is needed to safeguard London's proud tradition of healthcare and medical education, and to forge new patterns of healthcare, medical education and research to meet Londoners' requirements in a new century."

Commenting on what were radical recommendations in the King's Fund report to reduce hospital provision, one newspaper said:

"Paradoxically those recommendations could well help ordinary Londoners if the money spent on specialist services were diverted to basic medical care".

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours: It was the *Evening Standard.*

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman is right: paradoxically—again—that newspaper was the *Evening Standard.* Many others made the same point, however. *The Guardian* said:

"only the ideologically blind are refusing to recognise the truths set out in the King's Fund Report that has rightly concluded that the present surplus cannot continue."

The Independent said:

"Change cannot be avoided. London's hospitals have been absorbing too high a share of NHS resources at the expense of hospitals elsewhere and of primary care standards in the Capital. The balance must be addressed. Sentiments aside, it is the patients who will gain".

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I fear that the Secretary of State may be in danger of misleading the House by quoting the King's Fund Research Institute, given that it has published another document more recently. In that document, produced in April 1994, it states that it may have been wrong—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order; it is a matter for the Secretary of State.

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman has failed to understand the significance of the King's Fund report. I suggest that he, too, should consult Baroness Hollis, who will be able to speak at length on the matter. He might also wish to read the remarks of Robert Maxwell, head of the King's Fund: only this week, he again spoke of the need for change and commended the progress that we are making.

The Times said:

"The structure of health care in the Capital is archaic".

The medical profession as a whole has been equally supportive. According to Paddy Ross, chairman of the Joint Consultants Committee,

"As a result of meaningful consultations, ministers produced a Government response to the Tomlinson Report the broad thrust of which is supported by the medical profession at national level".

Professor Chris Ham—who is, I believe, respected by hon. Members in all parties for his knowledge of health matters—said:

"The reality is that there is no alternative to a radical re-shaping of London's health services and only those out of touch with the direction of health policy would have believed otherwise".

He continued:

"Sentiment and political lobbying should not stand in the way of a restructuring that most independent commentators would argue is long overdue".

These changes are indeed long overdue. Professor Ham was right, the King's Fund was right and 20 reports in the past 100 years have been right. All that Labour says, however, is that there should be a moratorium, and that a further inquiry and report should be delayed. Even the hon. Member for Brightside was right when he said that the status quo in London was not an option; it is a sign of the Labour party's hypocrisy that he has been written out of the script for uttering such politically incorrect views.

Labour has turned its back on that wide consensus today because it puts its own short-term interests above those of the NHS, and above those of patients. Next week's elections in London are not about the NHS; they are about social services—*[Interruption.]* Labour Members clearly wish to divert attention from the record of their own authorities on social services, schools, roads—

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Housing.

Mrs. Bottomley: And on housing. I am not surprised: the so-called care workers of councils such as Lambeth bully the elderly and mentally ill in their care, while councils such as Islington allow the children under their protection to be exploited by pimps and paedophiles. In contrast, there are councils such as Kensington and Chelsea, which has advanced one of the most forward-looking health strategies in partnership with its local health authority. I was able to visit it last week. Such councils are responsible for the services that they provide, and act as good stewards of their local communities.

Where Labour is in power, it fails the vulnerable and deserts the sick. I need hardly remind the House that when it was in power nationally, it was the Confederation of Health Service Employees shop steward at the hospital gate who decided which patient was treated and which patients were not: if Labour Members are reluctant to remind the public of that, my hon. Friends will do so.

Once again, we have heard denigrating remarks about accountants. Only Labour believes that a health service can spend more than £100 million a day without needing good accountants. It is one of the largest, most complex organisations, providing vital services; it needs good, effective managers and accountants. That is why we owe so much to Sir Roy Griffiths and his report on management in the health service. *[Interruption.]* Labour Members interrupt most when they are least comfortable with my remarks.

I was speaking of the COHSE official at the gate deciding whether or not patients should be treated. This was an NHS run by thugs with a union rule book in one pocket and a Labour Government in the other. Now, in opposition, the Labour party cynically manipulates the health service for its own narrow partisan purposes.

Conservative Members remember the last general election, which the hon. Member for Livingston unwisely said would be a referendum on the NHS. We have not forgotten the disgrace of Jennifer's ear, and nor have the public. Labour's scare tactics then earned it contempt and lost it votes: when Londoners come to judge next week, let them show their contempt for Labour once again.

5.39 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I declare my interest, which the Secretary of State and the Minister well know. I am the Member of Parliament for Guy's hospital and, because of that, I have a somewhat front-line position in the debate about the future of the health service in London.

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

Like all London Members, I have constituents who use other London hospitals and other parts of London's health service. I certainly have constituents who are patients at St. Thomas's, and constituents who use King's, Bart's and many others. Why do they go other than to their local hospital? It is possibly because those are the best hospitals, and the London health service has some of the best health care in the world.

The background to the debate today may be divided into four significant considerations. The first was repeated in the more recent King's Fund reports, which have been alluded to today. A section in the King's Fund report has just been produced entitled, "Public Opinion" and a subsection called "Comparing dissatisfaction," which reads as follows:

"The King's Fund Institute has collected and analysed national survey data on the views held by Londoners and by people in the rest of the country concerning the NHS and constituent services . . . Londoners are consistently more dissatisfied with all aspects of their health services than people living in comparable metropolitan areas in the rest of England."

I remember when the senior nursing officer at Guy's came from Aberdeen. At the first meeting I had with her, she said that people in Aberdeen would not put up with the conditions of the health service in London and that the services in Aberdeen were considerably better. The purpose of today's debate is to try to bring about an understanding that there will be continuing dissatisfaction about the health service in London until the health care provided in our capital city is of the standard that it is in many other parts of the United Kingdom.

The second background point to today's debate is that 83 per cent. of people in the most recent opinion poll which I saw believe that there should be more money spent on the health service. Considerable numbers of people—more than 40 per cent.—said in the same poll that they were willing that 5p in the pound extra be spent. The opinion poll's support for the health service contrasts markedly with the lack of support in London for the Government.

It is a telling fact that, whereas at the general election the Conservative party's support in London was much higher than its average support throughout the country, the Conservative party's support now is much lower in London on average than in the rest of the country. That is not saying much, as the average in the rest of the country has come down, but more support has been lost in London than elsewhere.

The third obvious point is that the debate is all about the implementation of the health service reforms and the Tomlinson report.

The fourth point, about which the Secretary of State made a great song and dance, is that we are having the debate in the run-up to the London borough elections. If the right hon. Lady thinks that health is not an issue in the London borough elections, I do not know where she has been or to whom she has been listening.

Mr. Dobson: The accountants.

Mr. Hughes: Certainly it must be to people who never go out of their doors and talk to voters.

Voters determine the issues, not political parties, and the voters of London realise that local authorities have responsibility for social services but not for health services. They also realise that the way in which the health service is run has a direct impact on what local authorities can and ought to do. Many of the voters in London are extremely unhappy about the Government's proposals for the health service.

I should add a postscript lest it be thought that this is an inner London concern and not an outer London concern. An article—not written by politicians—appeared recently in a local newspaper in Kingston upon Thames entitled, "Ward Furore." The article discussed a subject of acute controversy in Kingston, which was reported as follows:

"Kingston Hospital is converting an empty ward into an exclusive unit for private patients and building a private operating theatre . . . The new private facilities may be paid for by the taxpayer . . . The hospital has had private patients since 1948, but the new unit and operating theatre will be the first exclusively for private use. At present, private and NHS patients use the same facilities."

It is not just in inner London, but in other parts of London that there is considerable voter dissatisfaction with the Government's proposals for the health service.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): The hon. Gentleman mentions the part that health is playing in the local elections. Will he take this opportunity to condemn unequivocally the action of his Liberal colleagues in the London borough of Sutton, where there are local elections, who are cynically scaremongering about the future of the excellent St. Helier hospital in my constituency?

My constituency also benefits from an even more well-known renal unit which covers the whole region. Both those excellent units are enjoyed by people from neighbouring constituencies, who have been scared witless by Liberal propaganda suggesting that the hospital is likely to close. Will the hon. Gentleman take this opportunity to condemn that cynical scaremongering?

Mr. Hughes: I happened to go to the Sutton civic offices today, and I have not seen any such scaremongering. The local authority in Sutton, which my colleagues run, has provided a direct bus service from St. Helier hospital—I went on the bus on the day the service was inaugurated—through the more deprived parts of Sutton into the middle of the borough. I do not think that such a policy is consistent with a belief that the hospital is about to close.

There is great concern in Sutton—as in Kingston and other boroughs, such as mine in Southwark—that the Government's policy towards the health service will not achieve the levels of resources which inner and outer London need.

Mr. Forman *rose—*

Mr. Hughes: In answer to the hon. Gentleman's question, I will inquire. If the matter is an election issue in Sutton, it is because the voters of Sutton want the health service to continue with maximum resources, and not to be at risk.

Mr. Spearing: Would not the problems that we have had in the past exchanges be solved if the Government took account of the latest King's Fund report, and not the reports to which the Secretary of State referred? The latest King's Fund report says:

"However, adjusting the balance between hospital and community-based care will take time. New services must be put in place before old ones are declared redundant."

If the Government would take the advice of that report, the situation that has just been described would not be relevant.

Mr. Hughes *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Before the hon. Gentleman attempts to answer, let me say that there have been two interventions since he began speaking and both have been lengthy. *[Interruption.]* Order. Many hon. Members are hoping to catch the Chair's eye before the debate finishes. If we continue to have long interventions of that nature, some will be unsuccessful.

Mr. Hughes: For that reason, I shall not give way unless there are exceptional circumstances. I know that a lot of hon. Members want to speak.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: No. The hon. Lady represents the same borough as the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman). I have dealt with the Sutton point.

Lady Olga Maitland *rose—*

Mr. Hughes: No, I shall not give way.

The voters, the people and the patients of London are so concerned because when the service is examined it is often found to be significantly wanting. A check on conditions in the acute sector of hospitals was carried out on 25 April. On that day, 58 Londoners faced delays of more than three hours in casualty wards while eight hospitals had clamped down on emergency admissions.

Hon. Members who represent London constituencies know that many people who need health care in London —usually because they live here, but sometimes because they work in London or are visiting—often cannot obtain that care in the way the NHS was intended to provide it. For as long as that remains the case, the Government must be much more careful about how they introduce changes in the health service.

The problem is that Londoners simply do not believe the Government. I will give the Secretary of State an obvious local example. She knows in advance what I am about to say. At the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, a small cottage-type hospital in my constituency serving people from Southwark and Lewisham, St. Olave's, was closed with the promise that the services would be preserved at Guy's. It is now clear that that will not happen if the Government's proposals go ahead because normal in-patient treatment will not be available under the reforms proposed at Guy's. It is not surprising that people do not believe the Secretary of State when promises made under one Administration are dishonoured under the next.

Mr. Tracey: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: No, I shall not give way.

The fundamental problem of the reforms in the health service is that they are being carried out without the assent and approval of the people most affected. If a Government who were elected on a minority of the vote in the country and in the capital city are determined to go ahead with extremely controversial reforms and set up a structure whereby all the health authorities are appointed exclusively by the Government, and then set up a structure whereby the providers are made into hospital trusts, all of which are appointed by the Secretary of State and their decisions taken in secret, it is not surprising that the people of London do not trust the management of the health service.

The health service employs many excellent people, including good administrators, but it is no longer an accountable service. It is accountable only to the Secretary of State, who neither listens nor hears. If she did, she would not go in the direction in which she is going and she would not lose the argument. Her speech today was a classic illustration. She spent five minutes discussing why the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) had spoken. That was not of huge interest to the people of London, important though it may be to the Secretary of State. She should have tried to win the case instead of making party political points. The Labour party has, perfectly properly, used a day allocated to it to discuss a subject of huge interest not just to the Labour party but to all parties in London.

Mr. Tracey: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: Perhaps I should make an exception and give way to the hon. Gentleman as he, too, represents a Kingston constituency. Next week, the Tories may lose that borough to us, so this may be the last time he can stand up and say that Kingston council is Conservative controlled.

I beseech the Secretary of State to listen. I will explain why the London case is being handled so wrongly and what she needs to do. Exceptionally, I shall give way to the leader of the Conservative group of London Members of Parliament so that he can have his swan song before a substantial Conservative defeat in London next week.

Mr. Tracey: I am sorry to disabuse the hon. Gentleman. He may be a little surprised next Thursday when the leader of the Liberal Democrat group in Kingston council loses his ward.

On a more serious point, the hon. Gentleman has been putting forward what he believes is a rationalised, plausible whinge to the House. I have before me a map from the London initiative zone showing the capital schemes commencing in 1993-94. In the hon. Gentleman's area of Southwark, together with Lambeth and Lewisham, there is a mass of capital schemes. The hon. Gentleman goes on about Guy's and St. Thomas's, where the clinicians have said that duplication was making clinical services inefficient. Does he deny that vast numbers of capital schemes are coming on stream in Southwark, Lambeth and Lewisham?

Mr. Hughes: It was not worth giving way to the hon. Gentleman. The answer is no, of course I shall not deny it. I have always given credit where it is due. The health needs of London are such that a huge amount of resources are still needed, for reasons which I shall briefly elaborate in a moment. If the Government listened to the needs of the users of the service, they would realise that running down loved and favoured centres of excellence with established teams of experts, which attract people from all over the country and the world, is not the way to develop the health service in the capital city.

A section at the beginning of the Tomlinson report sets out the health needs of London. It makes the clear case that, first, a huge number of people, other than those who live

[Mr. Hughes]

here, come to London for treatment; secondly, London has more under-privileged areas than anywhere else in the country; thirdly, London has a more diverse population needing more special health care than elsewhere in the country. It goes on to elaborate on the number of homeless people, the standardised mortality rates and the people with special needs, such as HIV and AIDS patients.

The Secretary of State did not concede entirely the point that I put to her in an intervention—that it is the same throughout the public service in London. It is never an argument to say that we can run down the amount of money spent here and distribute it in the rest of the country if the consequence is that we do not have the funding to meet the higher costs of providing the service here. Neither my hon. Friend the Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne), who speaks for the Liberal Democrats on health and represents a northern constituency, nor I have never argued that the Government should not develop the health service elsewhere. I put it on the record that, like the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, we have never argued that there should not be rationalisation in London. It is not logical to have four units dealing with the same specialty in four neighbouring hospitals if they can be concentrated in one.

We have consistently argued for a rational provision across London, but it must take account of factors such as the difficulty of travel, the number of people without cars, and the time it takes to cross London, which is often congested with traffic. It must take account of the fact that once a team of experts is destroyed, it cannot be built up again. It must take account of the fact that, whatever the Secretary of State may wish to do, people will always be referred to top specialists who happen to be based in top London hospitals and those people will come from elsewhere in the country and from abroad.

It is no solution to tell people in London that their hospital sites at Guy's, St. Thomas's, King's or Lewisham happen to be too expensive because of the cost of land, so the purchasing authority for the south-east London health authority must buy a cheaper service and people will have to go to Brighton to receive the care. That is not what the health service is supposed to be about, but it is the danger of the Government's policies. As the advertisements on hoardings in London say, the service is so run by accountants and fundholders that everything is determined by cost rather than care. [HON. MEMBERS: "Not true."] It is true. Ultimately, services are no longer provided, because health authorities are told that they have no more money. It is true that the purchasers choose where to buy the service. They will close a service—just as they have closed the ophthalmology unit at Guy's hospital so that patients are now treated at St. Thomas's—because that is how they believe that they will get best value for money, but it may not be the best place for the patient, as it may not be near where he lives or convenient for him to travel to. As the patient no longer has any direct say in the health authority, decisions are taken that run increasingly away from the needs of the London community.

Mr. David Congdon (Croydon, North-East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: I am sorry, but I shall not give way.

One bugbear is the fact that the Government have claimed great successes which have been fictional. I am delighted that this month the Government have announced that waiting times are to be be measured not from when the patient sees the consultant until when he or she is treated, but from the time a patient visits the doctor until he or she is treated. For the clock to be ticking only from the time one saw the consultant meant that, for many people, it was a year before the clock started to tick. I hope that we shall be honest about the assessment of waiting times. My constituents regularly come to me and say that they have been waiting for years, certainly for months, to be seen or treated. The same is true of constituents throughout the capital city. The test of the efficiency of the health service in delivering care to patients lies in the length of time taken between the need arising and the need being treated.

I come now to the subject of greatest concern to me and my constituents. Ministers still think that the case being put for keeping in-patient beds and an accident and emergency department of some sort at Guy's hospital is being put by consultants. The consultants may be making a case and they have an interest, but they also have a concern and if Ministers think that their battle is with the consultants and that it is the consultants whom they need to head off, they are fundamentally wrong. It is not the consultants who are most concerned about the rundown of services planned for Guy's hospital, but the people who work in and use the health service.

Our case is simple. We do not argue that there should be duplication. We do not argue that Guy's should stay open and Lewisham, King's or St. Thomas's close. That is definitely not our argument. We argue that, according to the Jarman scores, south London is under-resourced in terms of beds when compared with the rest of the capital city. When we consider the patients' needs, it is no good thinking about closing the accident and emergency department at one hospital unless it has been proved that there is spare capacity elsewhere. Above all, if the Government think that they can go on arguing that one hospital serving a catchment area and patients from much further afield can be closed without damaging Londoners' health care and putting their lives at risk, as well as a damaging the Government's reputation, they are sorely misguided.

I have always sought to be rational when putting the case for the health needs of my constituents in the capital city. My colleagues and I have always sought to be reasonable and have recognised that the health service is not a bottomless pit. But we want the Government to accept that there is still a good case for keeping the four hospitals in the south-east London health authority area and not taking out a hospital when such acute need is constantly and clearly not being met.

Ms Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that there is much concern in parts of my district of Lambeth and parts of Southwark that some of the propaganda material—good material—distributed by the "Save Guy's" campaign has been seen by some people as a campaign to close St. Thomas's hospital, not to save Guy's. It is important to state that that is not what is being put out. Will the hon. Gentleman give a firm commitment that the "Save Guy's" campaign is not about closing St. Thomas's hospital, as some of the denigrating literature

that has been circulating has been extremely badly received by people working at St. Thomas's who care very much about that hospital?

Mr. Hughes: I was not intending to give way, but I am happy to deal with the hon. Lady's intervention. I can expressly say to the hon. Lady, whom I respect and value as a colleague, although she is not in my party, that nobody involved in the campaign to keep Guy's open as an in-patient hospital and an accident and emergency hospital wants any reduction of services at St. Thomas's, King's or Lewisham. We believe that the figures, the evidence and the arguments advanced to Ministers show that there is a case for all the hospitals to remain without duplication and in a complementary way. Now that the initial misunderstanding is out of the way, I believe that increasing numbers of people at St. Thomas's—staff nurses, administrative staff and consultants—will realise that we must stand together or risk not standing at all.

The Minister for Health (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): I have listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman's answer to the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey). We must clarify the position a little further. It is a matter of public record that when I conducted consultation exercises at Guy's and at St. Thomas's, the consultants on both sides said that their overriding desire was for a single, acute hospital site. Each side said that they would like it to be on their site, but when specifically asked by me whether they wanted to retain the services on their site or on a single site, the consultants on both sides said that for clinical coherence they attached greater significance to a single site. As both hon. Members know, this year we are investing £18 million into the Guy's and St. Thomas's trust to enable it to function. That is extra money which will not be available to anyone else in the health service. In the light of the experience that I have just related, does the hon. Gentleman believe that we should keep spending more each year—on top of the £18 million and on a rising curve, as it would be—in order to maintain the clinical incoherence that he advocates?

Mr. Hughes: I am happy to answer that. The Minister knows that I want us to have a rational debate on agreed facts and figures. If we could consult on the facts and figures that led to the strategic decision announced in the House on 10 February by the Secretary of State, we would realise that there is no logic in the Government's conclusion. The logic of the Government's decision contains various anomalies, such as the Philip Harris house anomaly. A building was built for £140 million and it was then announced that it was not to be used for its intended purpose. It was also anomalous to open an accident and emergency extension on the very day it was recommended that it should be run down. There was an anomaly in the fact that people were asked to give money for a new building for a specific purpose. When it was announced that the building was not to go ahead, the people said that they wanted their money back, which increased the bill for taxpayers.

If the Government are willing to sit down with the people at St. Thomas's and Guy's, the local community, the community health council and people who care, including Conservative and Opposition Members, we can win the argument to show that the facts and figures—the cost benefit to the Government and to the taxpayer—show that it is better to keep fully functioning hospitals on both sites. If the Minister will let us put the case, we believe that we can persuade him of it. My hon. Friend the Member for Rochdale, who speaks on health matters for the Liberal Democrats, and I have only ever asked that the Government's health service reforms should be the subject of consultation and should be based on agreed facts and figures. If the Government do that, their popularity may increase, but if they continue with their present policies I predict that the Government, as well as the patients who need the health service in London, will be the losers.

6.8 pm

Mrs. Marion Roe (Broxbourne): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak early in the debate.

The Select Committee on Health, of which I am Chairman, has taken a keen interest in the national health service provided in London, with particular emphasis on the Tomlinson report. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State explained earlier, over the years, 19 reports on the future of health care in London have been produced. The Tomlinson report was the 20th such report. The Health Select Committee decided that it would not produce report No. 21, but would instead keep a watching brief on the issue. However, I am certain that everyone will agree that the Tomlinson report was necessary, and some will claim overdue.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said earlier, even the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett), admitted that the "status quo is no longer an option". Ministers need a great deal of courage to take the essential decisions, some of which are likely to be unpopular. I congratulate my right hon. Friend and her ministerial colleagues on grasping the nettle, because it had to be done.

In order to put the debate into perspective, I think that we should remember that the population of inner London requiring health services has changed dramatically over the years. In 1901, the population of inner London was 4,533,000. In 1991, the population of inner London was 2,080,000—more than a 50 per cent. decrease. One million people have left London in the past 30 years. Many former Londoners have moved into the home counties and beyond, some of them settling in my constituency in Hertfordshire, and they are looking for high-quality national health services where they live now, not where they used to live.

In recent years, there has been conflict over the distribution of funds within the NHS London regions, the bone of contention being equity between inner London on the one hand, and outer London and the home counties on the other. It has always been claimed that too large a slice of the cake was being taken for central London hospitals and not enough was being distributed to the areas where the population was now living.

I welcomed the Government's policies in "Making London Better", which stated that their overall objectives were to improve the quality of patient care for Londoners, to improve the services provided by the family doctor and other community-based health services, to ensure that hospital services responded to the changing demands of patients, to ensure that changes in medical practice—such as the growth of day surgery—were accommodated, to ensure that the high costs of overheads in London hospitals

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are progressively addressed and, importantly, to preserve and enhance London's reputation as a centre of excellence in treatment, teaching and research.

Of course, change of any sort is always difficult to accept in some quarters and sometimes it is even more difficult to implement. Many groups will lobby for their local hospital to remain as it is and support their local medical team in this endeavour. But I believe that the greatest problem caused by the reforms was the pall of uncertainty for the future which hung over many of our great London hospitals. However, when final decisions were taken by the Secretary of State for Health, I found that a return of confidence was quickly evident and an enthusiastic approach to "getting on with the job" was stimulated.

In 1993, the Health Select Committee visited the Lambeth community care centre and the Chelsea and Westminster hospital in May, and the Queen Elizabeth hospital for children and St. Bartholomew's hospital in July. In 1994, we visited the Charing Cross hospital in January; the Royal Marsden hospital, Chelsea site, in February; and the Hammersmith hospital and the Royal postgraduate medical school in April. We are planning to visit St. Thomas's hospital in May, and Guy's and King's College hospitals in June.

Wherever we have gone, we have been given a very warm welcome. I must place on the record the fact that I have not witnessed the atmosphere of total doom and gloom within these establishments which is being promoted by the press and Oppostion political parties. We have also called before us as witnesses members of the Tomlinson inquiry team, including Sir Bernard in December 1992; the London implementation group and its chairman, Sir Tim Chessels, in July 1993; and the Secretary of State and her ministerial team in March 1993 and March 1994.

Over the past week or so, there has been a great deal of controversy relating to the numbers of hospital beds available in inner London and the criteria that are being used to provide the exact figures. There is no doubt in my mind that, from what I have seen on my visits to London hospitals, the "number of beds" criterion should no longer be used to measure quality of care and effectiveness of health services. It is the number of patients who are treated and the quality and outcome of that treatment which are important. Beds are a very poor indicator of what can be and is being done in the NHS.

I will explain my reasons for saying that. On 13 April, members of the Select Committee visited Hammersmith hospital and were very impressed by the work that is being undertaken there. During our visit, Committee members were provided with the opportunity of learning about a procedure called interventional radiology, which is the branch of radiology dealing with non-invasive curative procedures under imaging control—for example, blocking or unblocking arteries, and removing gall stones or renal stones percutaneously and so on. These procedures are usually done under local anaesthetic and do not involve surgical incisions.

We saw for ourselves a procedure called embolisation, which is the branch of interventional radiology concerned with the occlusion of blood vessels in the treatment of bleeding, tumours or arteriovenous malformations. I will outline the case that we saw.

The man was in his early 40s. He had had pulmonary arteriovenous malformation since birth—that is, a hole between the opolmonary artery and vein. In his case, it was solitary, but in most patients they are multiple, often affecting both lungs. He was blue because 20 per cent. of his blood was shunting through the hole instead of being oxygenated. Many patients have strokes, as would probably have been the case with this patient, as a result of the condition because little clots of blood—we all have them—which should be filtered from the circulation by the lungs go through the hole and end up in the brain. That happens to 60 per cent. of patients with this condition.

The operation that took place was this: a tube, or catheter, was passed from the femoral vein in the groin, through the heart and into the hole in the lung vessels. This was done under local anaesthetic and was painless. The patient watched the procedure on television. The hole was plugged with a metal device called an embolisation coil, which was developed at the Hammersmith hospital. He did not feel anything and his blood oxygen saturation improved immediately—that is to say, he went from blue to pink.

Following the operation, the patient stayed in hospital overnight and went home the next day. He would be able to return to work in seven to 10 days, depending on his job. He has been cured and left with two healthy lungs.

Now I will tell the House what would have happened some years ago to that man with that condition. Half his lung would have had to be removed. Most patients with more than one lesion in the same lung require a pneumonectomy. If the lesions affect both lungs, which is usually the case, there is no treatment. A heart-lung transplant would be the only option.

The hospital can now treat these multiple cases—some patients have 60 to 100 plugs in their lungs. We should remember that chest surgery requires general anaesthesia and an operating theatre full of sterile instruments, people, blood to be cross-matched and so on. Chest surgery makes a large scar and requires stitches. It also involves a healing period and post-operative pain. It would thus have meant 10 days in hospital, with 10 or 12 weeks convalescence before returning to work. There would also be an increased risk of operative morbidity—that is to say, complications and a higher mortality rate than occurs with the embolisation method. Moreover, the patient would lose a normal lung, which means trouble in the future if the remaining lung goes wrong.

Interventional radiology can therefore reduce in-patient stay times and enable more patients to be put through the same beds. It can also abolish the need for the beds, as many procedures can be done on out-patients. The patient that I have described was in a hospital bed for one night instead of 10 days.

Let us not forget either that there are many other procedures which allow day surgery, because modern technology has created a completely different approach to illness and to many conditions—not to mention allowing some people to stay at home with their illnesses being properly controlled by drugs, instead of their being forced to resort to hospitalisation.

I repeat that bed numbers are not a reliable currency in health care. The concept is flawed.

The development of the procedure that I outlined earlier, however, requires centres of excellence to which patients can be referred for procedures to be devised and perfected by doctors. Whatever system the Government put in place, there must be provision to protect the resources of the institutions that generate the medical developments which will ultimately benefit the nation, in terms of quality of health care and of economics.

The good news from Hammersmith hospital is that the removal of the recent threat hanging over it has had important side-effects. Stability and confidence have been restored, and industrial and commercial financial support has flowed into the hospital for research. I am sure that the Government understand the enormous worry and disruption caused by the changes that are necessary in London's health care, and the importance of decisions being made as quickly as possible.

I hope that the Opposition parties, and others, will realise that times have changed dramatically and that the focus on bed numbers in inner London hospitals has become meaningless. There are fewer people living in London, following a continual population decline for 90 years. New procedures remove the necessity of long-term stays in hospital. New drugs keep patients at home instead of in hospital. Day surgery is now highly effective and efficient and the excellent facilities in hospitals in the provinces mean that patients need no longer come to London for sophisticated treatments. Primary health care and community services need to be the targets for improvement in London, and that is the area in which the Government should be promoting modern, high-quality health care—with support from all parties in the House.

6.22 pm

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): First, may I pick up a point made by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). I join him in welcoming the decision to include the time spent waiting for a first appointment with a consultant in the waiting time before a treatment. Certainly, for patients who are suffering while waiting for hospital treatment, it constitutes part of the waiting period and I welcome the fact that the Government have decided to count it as such.

Last year, I obtained information about waiting times in my district, specialty by specialty, from the family health services authority. When I put a question to the Secretary of State about the general position in London, however, the response was that the Department of Health does not keep such information centrally. That is one reason why this evening I want to discuss the absence of any strategic plan —or the ability to draw up one—for London because of the absence of a strategic health authority.

Clearly, if there is no strategic health authority for London the Department of Health must be responsible for collecting the information and keeping the statistics, but time after time when Ministers are questioned about London, the answer that they give is that the information is not held centrally.

The Secretary of State today talked of the blinkered ignorance of the Opposition. I wonder who she was talking about. It seems to me that anyone who criticises Government health policy these days is accused of blinkered ignorance. Would the Secretary of State, for instance, use the term to describe Professor Sir Colin Dollery? The right hon. Lady referred to the importance of research and of centres of excellence. Sir Colin, giving evidence to an inquiry set up by a London group of Labour Members, said that the Secretary of State's NHS reforms posed

"a major threat to research in London."

He told our inquiry that the reviews carried out by the London implementation group had

"created low morale and had increased the problems of recruitment and retention of research staff in London".

Mrs. Roe *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Austin-Walker: That is what professor Sir Colin Dollery told our inquiry last month.

The hon. Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) mentioned the excellence of the work at the Hammersmith. There is no doubt that such pioneering research and new techniques will lead, in a number of areas, to patients being treated more quickly, with less reliance on medication and with less trauma. It should, however, be recognised that modern techniques and research also mean that many more people can be treated in hospital for ailments for which there used to be no treatment. They used to suffer in silence and in pain at home. There is thus a double edge to these modern developments and they do not necessarily only mean that our reliance on hospital beds can be reduced.

The King's Fund has been quoted in defence of Government policies. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) quoted part of the King's Fund report, published this week, to the effect that

"adjusting the balance between hospital and community-based care will take time. New services must be put in place before old ones are declared redundant."

The Secretary of State was keen to refer to the previous report of the King's Fund, but I draw her attention to the most recently published one. It states that to achieve sensible change without reducing health care for Londoners will require substantial new investment of resources in the capital. The report points out that, hitherto, that has been resisted because of the argument that London was overfunded. The Secretary of State and other Ministers have in the past quoted the King's Fund to support their argument that London was over-provided for, yet now the fund says that

"the capital's health care needs have been underestimated. There are now good reasons for believing that London merits a larger—not a smaller—share of the NHS cake."

Calculations by the King's Fund Research Institute suggest that purchasing power for hospital and community health services in London

"should be increased by approximately £200 million."

I hope, therefore, that since the Secretary of State has placed so much reliance on the excellence of the King's Fund in the past, she will also take note of what it has said most recently.

Mr. Congdon: I have read the report carefully, even though it was delivered to hon. Members only last night. Does the hon. Gentleman concede that the figure of £200 million is merely an assertion? There are no calculations in the report to show how it was arrived at—

Ms Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): Yes there are.

Mr. Congdon: Not in the report that we have received.

Mr. Austin-Walker: I hope that other colleagues will pick up the points raised in the King's Fund report, but I would point out that all the assertions that the Government have made in the past, basing their evidence on Tomlinson,

[Mr. Austin-Walker]

were that London has been over-bedded and, therefore, overfunded. All the research in the King's Fund Institute report published this week shows that the argument that London is over-bedded is fallacious.

There have been suggestions that London is receiving too large a share of the cake. My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) said earlier that London was receiving something like 15 per cent. of the share of the NHS cake and that London accounted for something like 15 per cent. of the total population. It does not seem as though the allocation to London is out of sync with the rest of the country.

My hon. Friend pointed out that, in terms of the police services, the Government recognise that London has increased needs, and, therefore, increased costs. There is a disparity in the Government's attitude towards the police and the fact that 29 per cent. of national expenditure on the police force goes to London to serve 15 per cent. of the population. Many of the factors that influence that in terms of cost and needs also influence the cost of the health service and the health needs of Londoners.

I shall refer to my own locality. The Secretary of State referred in passing to the Brook hospital. Unfortunately, my hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) was unable to intervene. Greenwich health district comprises the constituencies of Woolwich, Greenwich and Eltham. There has been a 25 per cent. loss of acute beds in the Greenwich health district in the past 10 years. Since 1982, the number of beds has decreased from 971 to 733. The number of beds in all specialties has reduced by 26 per cent. from 1,598 to 1,181. Across London, there has been an average loss of one eighth in the number of beds and in the health district serving my part of south-east London, the reduction has been a quarter.

Mr. Jessel: Did not the hon. Gentleman hear the clear and obviously sound arguments from my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) that the sheer number of beds should no longer be seen as a sensible yardstick of the amount of care that has been provided? He is carrying on with his speech as if my hon. Friend had not said that.

Mr. Austin-Walker: I do not disagree that modern techniques and improvements in care may mean that some patients will stay in hospital for shorter periods and that that will increase the ability for a throughput of patients.

I would point out, however, that 165,000 people on waiting lists in London are waiting to get into hospital. Reducing the number of beds does not seem to be a sensible way to get the list down. The problem is not that the beds are not being used; they are being used where the funds for nursing and support staff are available.

Particular problems face the health care and health district of Greenwich. The Greenwich healthcare trust is operating with reduced resources this year because it is gaining fewer contracts. That is partly because of the trend that some areas that used to purchase from it are now purchasing locally, but also because of the compliance with the requirements on junior doctor hours, that require the healthcare trust to reduce its operating costs.

The calculations that the local healthcare trust is making for the future are based on the possible availability in the near future of the Queen Elizabeth military hospital. I ask the Minister to address the serious problem which now faces Greenwich health authority and the Greenwich healthcare trust. There is still some uncertainty about when the Queen Elizabeth military hospital will be available—if at all—to the national health service and the terms on which it may come over. The health care needs of residents of Woolwich, Greenwich and Eltham will suffer severely if the Brook hospital closes without the Queen Elizabeth military hospital coming on stream to replace it. There is, therefore, an urgent need for decisions by the Department of Health and Ministry of Defence on the future of the Queen Elizabeth military hospital. A number of urgent planning decisions need to be taken.

The Secretary of State said that Opposition Members had made very little reference to the increased investment in primary care. I acknowledge that there is to be substantial increased investment in primary care in the Greenwich waterfront in Greenwich and Woolwich. I welcome that investment in primary care, but it is taking place in isolation from any consideration of its relationship to the provision of acute services in the area and the acute services review strategy.

One issue on which we would question the Government policy is that the Secretary of State's policy is based on the premise that London is ill-provided for in terms of primary care and that improvements in primary care will reduce the need for hospital beds and admissions. I am not aware of any evidence from any western country or from anywhere in the world that shows that improvements in primary care reduce the demand on hospital services.

All those who gave evidence to the London health inquiry, including the chair of the local medical committee, made a clear statement that improvements in primary care and access to it lead to increased, not fewer, demands on hospital services. It seems, therefore, that the Government are operating on a wrong premise.

In support of that I would adduce the recent comments of the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology which suggest that improvements in screening and primary care will lead to extra nursing time, extra medical time, extra staff, extra in-patient days, extra out-patient visits and tertiary referrals to specialist centres. Many of the specialist centres in London are under threat by the Government review.

Will the Minister respond to the point made by Professor Sir Colin Dollery, that the Government's reorganisation of specialist units does not take any account of the possible capital costs of that relocation, which he has estimated at £1 billion?

It is not true, as the Secretary of State suggested, that Opposition Members have a total preoccupation with acute services and beds. I draw attention to the crisis in mental health in the capital city. The Mental Health Act Commission's report published in 1993 drew attention to crisis in inner city mental health services, including London. It stated:

"Implementation of section 117 Aftercare and the Care Programme Approach"—

that is the section of the Mental Health Act 1983 under which patients detained have a right to aftercare on discharge from hospital—

"is barely evident in many inner city acute units. The high morbidity levels in the inner city populations, lack of alternatives to admission, problems of homelessness and poor community service, are contributing factors to the crisis in inner city mental health services".

It is important that we address those issues.

The report of the inquiry into the care and treatment of Christopher Clunis, the Ritchie report, published in February 1994 specifies the high—more than 100 per cent.—bed occupancy rates in London's psychiatric units and the lack of supported accommodation. Those issues require the Government's urgent attention.

The House of Commons Health Committee report "Better Off in the Community" also referred to serious problems in mental health services in London. It expressed concern about the situation in some inner cities areas and contradictions in Government policy in the areas of health, housing and social security and identified the increased demands on mental health services which arise from social deprivation. That is a serious issue for most inner London boroughs and for some of the outer London boroughs as well, such as Newham, Haringey and others with a similar social make-up. The resource allocation formula needs to be reviewed to reflect that link.

The high level of homelessness affects the health service needs of the population of London. It does so in the sphere of mental health no less than elsewhere. The report of the Select Committee on Health pointed out the need for the allocation of resources specifically for housing. It identified the funding impasse that is preventing the development of permanent supported accommodation for homeless people with mental health problems who are living on the streets of London. The Government must address this matter urgently.

It has been suggested on a number of occasions that primary care and preventive measures may reduce the need for hospital beds. There is one way in which, in the long term, the need for beds could be substantially reduced. I refer to the fact that on Friday 13 May the Government could support the Bill being introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) to ban tobacco advertising. The Government may argue that the bulk of tobacco advertising is aimed at persuading people to switch brands, but it is clearly a fact that between 100 and 150 people a day die as a result of cigarette smoking. One of the principal aims of tobacco advertising is to recruit teenagers to replace the smokers who have died. In London, the problem of tobacco-related illness is as great as anywhere else in the country.

I want to mention briefly the question of the environment, although I realise that some of my hon. Friends, if they catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, intend to talk about environmental problems in London. I shall refer specifically to air pollution. The part of London that includes my constituency and that of the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) has one of the highest rates of asthma and respiratory illness in the country. We suffer from poor air quality. The Government's failure to tackle the problem of air pollution accounts for a major part of the demand on health care resources in the capital city. Their policies on health cannot be divorced from their policies on issues such as transport. In transport terms, but also in health care terms, it makes absolutely no sense for the Government to press ahead with their ludicrous programme of road building in south-east London, which will have such a detrimental effect on the health of the population.

My last point concerns the London ambulance service. Before becoming a Member of Parliament, I was responsible for introducing a report published by the Association of London Authorities on the crisis in the London ambulance service. That report pointed out many of the problems that the service faced at the time. The then Secretary of State for Health—now the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—dismissed it and accused us of merely being the mouthpiece of the trade unions. If the right hon. Gentleman had listened to the Association of London Authorities when he was Secretary of State for Health, we would not have the crisis that we are facing today.

I realise that the current Secretary of State has taken a personal interest since the computer went down and the London ambulance service crashed, but the most recent evidence is that since the right hon. Lady's intervention there has been no improvement in the service's response time. This is one of the most serious issues. It demonstrates that there is no strategic authority for London to plan ambulance services and that there is no system of accountability. Opposition Members not only insist that there should be a moratorium on the cuts and closures in health services in London, but argue for a system of accountability in respect of those services.

6.43 pm

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): I am glad of the opportunity to contribute to the debate from the Back Benches. The subject is of deep interest not only to Londoners but to millions of people outside the capital, including many in my constituency. That is so not least because of the possibility—to put it no higher—that the perpetuation of a pattern of health provision in London that is not adapted to meet contemporary needs will pre-empt resources that could be used elsewhere in the national health service.

Before coming to the substance of that argument, I should like to take issue with the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), who said that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was mistaken in spending time on an exploration of the reasons for the absence of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett). It is of interest and concern to the House that, on a day on which the Opposition have an opportunity to choose the subject for debate, their principal spokesman on health should have decided to absent himself.

However, I can probably throw some light on the matter. My hon. Friends and I have come to realise that, after two years of mouthing slogans dreamt up by his trade union paymasters, the only achievements to the credit of the hon. Member for Brightside are, first, the removal of any lingering doubts about the wisdom and merits of the Government's national health service reforms and, secondly—and more surprisingly—the fact that he may have produced nostalgia and even affection among Conservative Members for the days when the Opposition's health spokesman was the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook).

However, all is not lost for the hon. Member for Brightside. The Opposition made an inspired choice in asking the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) to lead the debate. I believe that the hon. Gentleman is the only Member of Parliament capable of making the hon. Member for Brightside appear to be intelligent, statesmanlike and original. Indeed, his speech was one of the most disgraceful and blatant attempts to exploit a very serious issue for very short-term political

[Mr. Tim Yeo]

advantage. If the hon. Gentleman has done anything, it may be to have restored the reputation of his hon. Friend the Member for Brightside.

The two hon. Gentlemen have a common approach. Their speeches on health issues are designed to achieve two things—first, to please their trade union paymasters; secondly, to inspire as much fear as possible in the minds of patients by spreading misleading scare stories about the Government's health policy. That is matched by their absolute refusal to tackle any questions concerning the allocation of finite resources between competing priorities. Indeed, their determination to duck any remotely hard choice appears to be without limit. Perhaps it is matched only by the similar capacity that the Liberal party so often displays.

Despite the bluster in the opening speech of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, in which he rather boastfully said that my hon. Friends to whom he had given way on a previous occasion had all lost their seats—

Mr. Dobson: All but one of them.

Mr. Yeo: Sorry—all but one of them. As soon as the hon. Gentleman was confronted with interventions from Conservative Members, who clearly knew a great deal more than he about the health service in London, he refused to give way for further interventions. I want to give him another opportunity to answer a question that he refused to answer earlier. Is it Labour party policy to increase the per capita spending on health in London? If so, does the party propose to fund the increase by reducing the allocation to other regions or by raising taxation? If it is the latter, I hope that the hon. Gentleman has cleared the matter with his hon. Friend the shadow Chancellor. I shall gladly give way to him. He failed to answer that question when it was put to him earlier. If he needs to phone his hon. Friend the Member for Brightside, there will probably be time to get an answer.

Mr. Dobson: First, I should like to make it quite clear that my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) had a long-standing engagement to address a public health conference in Birmingham and to visit parts of the city, and he asked me to stand in for him. I was delighted to do so as the shadow Cabinet member with responsibility for London. I can reasonably claim at least some connection with the national health service in central London, as I and my family depend on it.

Complaints by Conservative Members about Labour's choice of a debate on health in London to take place in Opposition time are total cant and hypocrisy. The current Secretary of State for Health has not initiated a single parliamentary debate on health since she came to office. Until she does, it does not lie with her to criticise anybody. As I made clear in my speech—

Mr. Yeo: Answer the question.

Mr. Dobson: I remember the second part of the question: I am not stupid, as are some Conservative Members. In view of all the money that the Government's reforms are wasting in the health care system in London, a substantial part of any extra funds that are needed to provide services should come from getting rid of most of the management consultants, PR consultants and general hangers-on who have been ripping off the health service for donkey's years.

Mr. Yeo: The House will have noted the hon. Gentleman's complete failure to answer my question. He is not even as good as the Liberal party spokesman at ducking the issue. We now have confirmation that Labour party Front-Bench spokesmen plan to have health debates on days when their health service spokesman has long-standing engagements in Birmingham.

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): That is precisely the point that I was about to make. Does my hon. Friend agree that perhaps the Labour party could do with a few management consultants?

Mr. Yeo: My hon. Friend makes a most penetrating intervention.

The timing of the debate finally blows apart any pretence that the Labour party is genuinely concerned about the health needs of London. It is worried only about making political points and it has timed the debate just one week before the London local elections. That can only be interpreted as a desperate last-minute attempt to divert attention from the ghastly failures of Labour-controlled London local authorities.

Labour-controlled Lambeth borough council is currently collecting less than half the council tax that it should be collecting. Islington has almost £1 billion of debt, which is more than £5,500 per head of population—the worst figure in the country. The Labour-controlled boroughs of Hammersmith, Southwark and Lambeth have more than £64 million in uncollected rents. That is a massive waste of resources which is not only a terrible indictment of the management and administration of those boroughs, but an everyday tragedy because it denies services to the people of those boroughs.

Mr. Corbyn: The hon. Gentleman spoke about Islington. Will he confirm that the vast majority of its debt was approved by Ministers in the Department of the Environment, not by least the hon. Gentleman when he was a Minister in that Department, and that the money was borrowed to build houses and social service and other centres to provide a decent service for the people of that borough? Should the hon. Gentleman not at least concede that his Government are now preventing boroughs from developing the services that are necessary to assist with community care?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. We must return to the health service debate.

Mr. Yeo: The matters that I have mentioned greatly affect the residents of those boroughs. I am glad for the on-the-record confirmation that the Department of the Environment does not block Labour-controlled London boroughs from borrowing the money that they need. At least there is a chance that next Thursday London voters will put all that right by returning Conservative local authorities. Meanwhile, we should celebrate the tremendous success and progress of the Government's health service reforms in London and the implementation of their new policies that are specific to London.

I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health, who is the first holder of the office to address directly the complex problems of the

pattern of health provision in the capital city. That is a clear example of the Government's willingness to address difficult issues and to introduce policies regardless of their short-term popularity. We want to do what is right for London in the long term. The Secretary of State has correctly identified the critical importance of improving primary health care and community services in London. Without those building blocks, nothing else that we try to do with London's hospitals or the rest of the health service will stand any chance of success. The Secretary of State and the Minister of State have shown great courage in addressing that matter.

For 100 years, reports identifying the problems in London's health service have been discussed, shelved and ignored. At last, we have a Government who are determined to put the situation right. Of course, the task is not easy and the concerns of people with direct experience of the great London hospitals must be respected. That experience may have been accumulated by those who were patients, students, nurses or doctors.

Through my family, I have direct experience of the excellence of the radiotherapy department at Charing Cross hospital. However, none of us should allow personal experience to colour our judgment of what is right for the future of health provision in London. It is easy and tempting to take on the attractive role of championing a great institution, and plenty of people are willing to speak up for individual hospitals. But, from direct experience, even more people have knowledge of the shortcomings and deficiencies of primary health care and community services. Because those concerns are not always as sharply focused and do not relate so directly to premises and institutions, they are not always articulated so loudly and clearly.

The Government's analysis is right. All serious analysts of the London scene—and, for a brief period, there was a hope that that might include the Labour party—recognise the need for fundamental and substantial change. Merely because a hospital has a famous history does not mean that it should be preserved for all time in aspic. My hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe), who is the Chairman of the Select Committee on Health, spoke about the advances in medical treatment which have greatly shortened hospital stays.

Nowadays, far fewer people wish to travel to London from the provinces. Patients do not come from constituencies such as mine in the same volume to great London teaching hospitals, because the high-quality care and treatment that was previously available only in London is now far more extensively available and people prefer to be treated much closer to home. As a result, the London hospitals depend far more than ever before on serving the needs of their local populations.

The introduction of the purchaser-provider split has been a huge spur to greater efficiency. It has allowed a rationalisation of resources which in itself can be immensely beneficial. Eleven years ago, when the Great Ormond street special health authority, as it then was, proposed the closure of the Tadworth Court children's hospital, I led a campaign that was backed by the leading voluntary organisations to save the hospital. The proposals that we put to the then Secretary of State for Health and Social Security were accepted and they were a kind of precursor of the NHS trust model.

We established the Tadworth Court trust as an independent charity, which I chaired for the first seven years of its existence. By refining the services offered by the hospital so that they were more responsive to the needs of what we would now call purchasers—in this case Great Ormond street itself and some of the neighbouring health authorities and, indeed, some local authority social services departments—we were able to increase the use of the facilities at Tadworth, improve the efficiency and, therefore, lower the costs of the services there, and to release a huge amount of surplus assets in the form of land. Those assets were sold for about £15 million, which was available to boost the Great Ormond street capital programme. That is a clear example of how rationalisation, which sometimes seems threatening to people because of its possible consequences, can produce benefits all the way round.

The real test of the Government's health service reforms and their policies for London will be in assessing whether they have achieved the improvements in primary health care that are so badly needed. The resources identified by the Secretary of State for Health that are going to many areas of the London health service, but especially to primary health care, should be used not just to improve the general quality of primary health care, but to raise the calibre and the level of staffing and to extend the present trend of improvements to GP premises. Those are important steps.

The hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker), who has briefly left the Chamber, tried to suggest that improvements in primary health care do not affect the demands on hospitals. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is clear that there are excessive demands on the accident and emergency services in a number of London hospitals which are directly attributable to the inadequacy of the primary health care system in those areas.

Alongside the improvements in primary health care, we need to see improvements in the community services, and those will depend on good co-operation between the health authorities and the local authority social service departments, regardless of their political complexion. If we see those improvements, there will also be the prospect of easing some of the pressure on the expensive central London acute hospital beds, because people will be able to be looked after more quickly following treatment in the community.

The Government's analysis of the situation in London is correct. The actions that they have set in motion are also correct. The tragedy is that the Labour party has become so obsessed by politics and votes and by the need to obey the demands of its trade union paymasters, so divorced from the reality of the health needs and the welfare of the patients in London, that it is now unable even to enter into a rational debate on this vital subject.

The way in which the issue is being exploited on the basis of a dishonest and distorted view of the facts presented by the Labour party is deplorable. The hon. Members for Holborn and St. Pancras and for Brightside appear ready to stoop to levels from which even the hon. Member for Livingston might have refrained two years ago. They appear to be conducting some sort of Dutch auction to see how low they will take the standards of debate.

But the voters and the patients will draw their own conclusions. I believe that next week the Labour party will be rejected on a massive scale across London. People will want to back Tory measures to strengthen London's health service.

7.1 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): That was a most interesting contribution from the hon. Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo). I have often thought that one of the problems of Parliament is the amount of politics that goes on within it. It is quite shocking and deplorable.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: Something must be done about it.

Mr. Corbyn: My hon. Friend is quite correct. I am not sure what, but something should be done about it.

I am rather looking forward to a speech from one of the London Conservative Members. I believe that there still are some and presumably at some point they will try to speak, but thus far we have heard nothing from them. We have heard Conservative Members from the fringes who have inherited some London people in their constituencies, but nothing yet from a London Conservative Member; we look forward to that.

I thank my Front-Bench colleagues for choosing today's debate on the London health service. It is an extremely important subject and such an opportunity is welcome. I was particularly amazed by the Secretary of State's contribution. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and I have worked out the pattern of her speech. It was rather like cracking a cipher. It was written by a committee of six people. They took it in turns to write a paragraph and then started again at the beginning. That is why the speech hopped from subject to subject so many times and kept coming back to where it started.

The debate underlines an extremely serious situation in the health service in London. The Government, who have been in office since 1979, have presided over a large number of hospital closures and wholesale changes in the structure and philosophy of the NHS. From a service that was free at the point of use in 1979, the god of the internal market now controls everything; there is massive privatisation within the NHS and there are serious problems with morale and the way in which people are employed.

Members of my union, Unison, used to feel that they had secure, if not well-paid, jobs within the NHS. They felt that they were there to contribute to the NHS and they did that with extreme dedication. Many of them now suffer the indignity of their jobs being put out to auction every five years in order to find the lowest bidder as more and more services are contracted out. The responsibility of those people who have given such wonderful service to the NHS has never really been recognised by the Department of Health.

If the Government had not been so arrogant for the first 12 years in office and had stopped to listen to what ambulance drivers, workers, officers and paramedics were telling them about the state of NHS ambulances in London, purchasing, the computer and safety, something would have been done earlier. It took the inspirational work of members of the National Union of Public Employees and the Confederation of Health Service Employees, now in Unison, and my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South during his many efforts in the House, to expose what was going on in the London ambulance service and eventually, belatedly, reluctantly, the Secretary of State did something about it. We are still not following Orcon standards in London. We are nowhere near reaching those standards, and a great deal still needs to be done in the London ambulance service. I give that as just one example of the problems created by the Government's attitude towards the health service in London.

The problem is compounded by the obsessive secrecy surrounding the internal market. I recall a meeting that I had with the former manager of the London ambulance service who, fortunately, saved us all by resigning. I asked him whether he could give me the figures on the costs of vehicles and running the London ambulance service. The answer was that it was a commercial secret. He said that it was commercially confidential information. That was from an NHS manager in an NHS-funded operation, because the service was being prepared for privatisation through contracting out. That is what happens when a service as important as the health service is allowed to be dominated by the internal market.

Many hon. Members have referred to population loss, particularly in inner London, the closure of hospitals and waiting lists. As hon. Members were speaking, I was thinking of the number of hospitals that I have known to be closed during my time as a union official in NUPE since 1975 and as a Member of Parliament since 1983. In my locality, for example, the Royal Northern hospital, a wonderful institution on the Holloway road, the borough's war memorial, has been closed. The first letter that I received from a Minister withdrew the pledge given by his predecessor in 1982 that the closure of the casualty unit at the Royal Northern did not presage the closure of the whole hospital. The first letter that I received from a Minister said that he was sorry, but that was a mistake; it did presage the closure of the entire hospital. That hospital is now closed and has not been replaced. It has been replaced by one new wing in the Whittington hospital just up the road, with fewer beds than before and a longer waiting list.

It says something for the competence of the Department of Health that the Secretary of State was dispatched to open the Great Northern wing of the Whittington hospital last August. What she did not realise was that she was opening a building that had already been partly closed. She was a bit late. A number of wards had already been taken out of operation as a result of lack of funding.

We have the nonsense in London of 165,000 people waiting for hospital appointments and 22,000 beds recently taken out of operation with an increasing number of beds simply not being used because the money is not there to pay the staff. That is an insult to the people of this capital city.

The Government's solution to the crisis was to set up the Tomlinson inquiry. That could have been a good opportunity for a genuine public inquiry with participation by the people of London—doctors, nurses, consultants, trade unions, community health councils, various health campaigns, bodies representing the elderly, those with disabilities and the homeless; all could have made a contribution to a serious inquiry into the future structure, funding and quality of care of London's health service. But not a bit of it.

Mr. Spearing: A one-man band.

Mr. Corbyn: Precisely. We had a one-man band and a secretive operation that came out with a report that proposed a further removal of 4,500 beds and which, as we speak, casts a shadow over the future of a further 16

hospitals. There has been no openness about it. The whole thing has been dominated by the desire to cut costs and to enforce the internal market and the purchaser-provider split, without giving a fig for the people of London and their concerns.

In my brief contribution, I want to refer to the work of a group of London Labour Members which should have been done by the Secretary of State. We undertook an inquiry. We took evidence over 10 and a half hours from a number of people. Obviously, we could have taken a lot more evidence and the inquiry could have gone on much longer, but we felt that it was reasonable to take that amount of evidence, backed up by a great deal of written evidence. Many people gave their time, their information and their energy to tell us what was going on in the NHS in London. I shall quote briefly from Professor Peter Barnes of the National Heart and Lung Institute, who said:

"This Government has destroyed the good will of health workers".

The inquiry report says:

"There is clearly a failure in the NHS to consult those who work and use the system in London . . .

Many of the submissions received contained pleas for medical ethics to take precedence over the market ethos."

How often has one talked to nurses, doctors and others who have asked why they have to spend all their time filling in forms about the purchase and the cost of particular medicines? What is it like for doctors to say that they no can longer prescribe Calpol because it has been taken off the list? Those are problems at one level, but we may move to a more serious level due to the obsession with cutting costs and with enforcing an internal market in the health service.

Our inquiry also demonstrated the many problems that exist in London and the relationship between poverty and ill health. Many, such as Rowntree and Charles Booth, have done work on that subject and have shown that the greatest cause of ill health in this capital city is poverty —poverty through an inadequate public health system, inadequate drainage and inadequate medical services and other such facilities. The slum clearance programmes and the drainage programmes were part of the growth in health provision.

What do we have now in London? There are 750,000 people who rely on wages that are well below the poverty level, and the costs of living in London are considerably higher than in the rest of country. One in four of all London children rely on free school meals, often as their main source of nourishment. The only reason why they are eligible for free school meals is that their parents' incomes are on the level of income support or below. That is a serious problem. In many schools in my constituency—I am sure that my hon. Friends who represent other inner London constituencies find the same—80 or 90 per cent. of the children who have school meals get them free because of the poverty of their parents.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: Will my hon. Friend also comment on the relationship between poverty and health and the figures that I have received from the Department of Health about the number of notified cases of tuberculosis in England and in London? There were 855 cases in 1992 in England as a whole, 258 of which were in London—almost a third in London alone.

Mr. Corbyn: My hon. Friend underlines an important point. If my memory serves me correctly, she has just said that almost a quarter of the cases of tuberculosis occur in London; and London does not have a quarter of the nation's population. Many of the poverty-related illnesses, which were the bane of Londoners in the 19th century and in the early part of the 20th century, are returning. The poverty-related chronic illnesses, which were written about so well by many of our forerunners in the House, are on their way back.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): May I refer my hon. Friend to the recent report of Crisis at Christmas, which shows epidemic levels of tuberculosis among London's homeless?

Mr. Corbyn: My hon. Friend is correct. It is hardly surprising that people who are homeless end up with tuberculosis. If homeless people are forced to sleep in bus shelters, tube stations or on the streets of London outside expensive hotels and empty, privately owned flats, it is hardly surprising that they contract chronic illnesses. Indeed, our inquiry received evidence from one of the homeless groups that the life expectancy of a man who is homeless on the streets of London is 46. That is an appalling figure and an indictment of our society. We need a health service and an attitude that deal with those problems.

The standardised mortality rates in London, on the analysis of the King's Fund, show that 30 per cent. more residents of inner London areas in the 15 to 64 age group die annually than would be predicted on the basis of national figures. That confirms the point made by hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice) about tuberculosis. We have a serious problem.

On top of that, what do we get but a continual decrease in the number of available hospital beds and the great difficulty that many of those people who are suffering extreme poverty face in getting a GP in the first place? We gathered evidence from those who deal with such matters. They said that it was very hard for many homeless people to become registered with a GP. Obviously, they have to go to a casualty unit instead to try to obtain treatment.

I recognise that, as the Secretary of State mentioned, the unit that has been opened in the Camden and Islington area is a step forward. However, it would be an even better step forward if GPs were put under some pressure, which ensured that they took on refugees, people whose first language is not English and people who are homeless, because there is evidence that some GPs are reluctant to take on people who fall into those categories.

I am not tarring all GPs with the same brush. Many GPs do an absolutely first-rate, excellent job and are generally concerned about the health of the entire population. However, something must be done about the problems that were illustrated by our inquiry. The Department of Health reported that between 8 and 14 per cent. of patients who were seen by London accident and emergency units were not registered with a GP. Clearly, there is a larger number of people than that who are not registered with a GP.

The Government are talking about transferring resources from hospitals to primary care. We have seen plenty of closures of hospitals and hospitals services, but we have not seen a commensurate increase or improvement in expenditure or in the service provided in a large number of facilities in the primary care sector.

I hope that the Government will be prepared to recognise that there are links between poverty and ill health. There are links between the environment and ill

[Mr. Corbyn]

health. Why is it that in many schools in London a quarter of all children are suffering from asthma of some sort, as my hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker) pointed out? If one goes into a school secretary's office, one sees a whole shelf full of nebulisers for children who suffer from chronic conditions of asthma, which is related, in part, to the growth of road traffic and of air pollution as a result. What utter madness to spend so much money on motorways, when we could be improving public transport and reducing pollution. We must consider those problems.

What also came out in our inquiry was the concern of many people for the future of not only special hospitals, but of research institutions in London. Sir Colin Dollery from London university gave interesting evidence in which he expressed deep concern about the future quality of medical research that can be undertaken in London because of the way in which the internal market runs and because of the lack of funding of those resources. I suspect that he was one of many who share that view.

We must also consider the problems of individual hospital closures and the campaigns that surround them. The list of some 16 hospitals in inner and outer London which are all under some threat includes Guy's, Dulwich, Hither Green, St. Bartholomew's and the Queen Elizabeth hospital in Hackney.

I was at a public meeting on Tuesday evening which concerned the future of Bart's. It was a local meeting, near to the hospital in the borough that I represent with my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith). It was packed. The people there were devastated that the courts had ruled against the application made jointly by the London boroughs of Islington and Hackney to keep the hospital open. However, they were absolutely determined to fight for their hospital. That hospital has been there for 900 years. If one talks to anyone outside London—

Mr. Spearing: Or in the world.

Mr. Corbyn: Indeed, if one talked to anyone, anywhere in the world about closing an institution of the excellence and with the record of Bart's, they would think we were completely mad. I suspect that we shall be left with a closed hospital and an empty office block on its site.

As for the idea that people should go elsewhere for health care, I refer to the words of the Secretary of State. She said that it is important for the services to go where the people are. Where will the people who live around Bart's, who use Bart's and who come from elsewhere to use Bart's go? How will they get there? That will create serious problems.

Serious problems are also caused by the closure of casualty units and the difficulties for ambulances in travelling through London during the rush hour at crisis times. It is not good enough to say that the air ambulance can sort out that problem. There is one air ambulance and that cannot sort out the problem. It will be solved only by maintaining the existing casualty units, which have provided such a good service in London for so long.

There are many other issues relating to the health service and I hope that they will be mentioned by other hon. Members during the debate. London has the principles of a very good health service. There is enormous public support for the principle of a national health service free at the point of use. Even the years of Tory Government have not managed to destroy the principle of a free national health service, despite the Government's considerable efforts to try to do so.

What we do not have in London is any sense of democracy in the planning or running of our health services; we have a secretive inquiry by one person who proposes wholesale cuts and closures; placepeople running the regional and the district health authorities; and the mania for the internal market dominating everything that goes on in every hospital and health service institution throughout London.

What we need is some democracy in the running of the health service. We need a London health authority that can plan for the needs of the capital city and preserve the centres of excellence that have given such good service, not just to the rest of this country but to the rest of the world. Instead, we are getting a domination of the service —domination by the internal market, domination by the worst aspects of accountancy, and a consequent loss of so many people's morale and faith in the health service.

The debate is very important and timely. Those who are trying to destroy London's health service—and I believe that some are—will rue the day that they did such things. It is important that we understand that the people of London are suffering from unemployment, poverty, ill health and a lack of certainty of the availability of an ambulance or hospital bed when they so desperately need it. Nothing that has been said by Secretary of State or the Tomlinson inquiry does anything to take away those concerns and fears.

We are suggesting today a London health authority. London is not over-provided for or over-bedded; if anything, there is under-provision. We want a recognition that if we are to have a healthy capital city, we must be prepared to spend the necessary money to pay for it. Closing hospitals is hardly the way to start doing that.

7.21 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I have sympathy with one of the points made by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). He is quite right to draw attention to the inter-relationship between the health of the nation, or the health of an individual, and the surrounding circumstances of his or her life. Indeed, much of what was behind the thinking of the NHS reforms was to make the links between the other services that impinge on somebody's life and health very much easier to make and build constructively than they were in the days when the NHS was dominated by the medical establishment and saw everything in medical terms. I shall return to that in a moment.

The service is changing very fast—although in most of the speeches of Labour Members, it would be hard to recognise that. I hope that, as the service develops, we shall see changes in role differentiation. For example, one reason for the logjams in some accident and emergency departments is that the medical profession is frequently very reluctant to delegate, as they are empowered to do, relatively simple surgical procedures to nurses with great experience and every capacity to perform them. I very much hope that the job specifications—rigid in many cases

—that exist in the NHS will be undermined, as there is growing confidence in the professional capacity of other non-medically qualified staff.

There are important debates to be had about the extent to which a medical model is necessarily the best for the delivery of quite a lot of the services that impinge on people's health. I very much welcome the way in which the reforms have lowered the walls between the disciplines, but there is still a long way to go. There is still too automatic an assumption of superiority among doctors, conferred by six or more years of initial training. On the other hand, in too many other specialisms in the NHS, far too little account is taken of the necessity for good research. I believe that both parts of the NHS have a great deal to learn from each other.

The NHS remains far too hierarchical in the way in which decisions are taken. Again, I welcome the growth in co-operation between social services, education and the NHS, and the growing respect that is coming between the different professionals in their different ways. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to strike a balance between the managers and the specialists, and ensure that decisions should not always go in favour of the managers. Genuine anxiety is felt by people who have given their lives to the NHS, and they sometimes feel that very enthusiastic macho managers do not pay them the respect that their experience deserves. That is a growing pain of the changes, but an important one to bear.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) came down to my part of the world recently, and among other adjurations that he directed to a medical and quasi-medical audience was that we should be prepared for massive technological changes coming over the NHS. So we should. I believe that it is now only a matter of time before the professional expertise of a specialist can be beamed down to many areas of the country, so the need to be physically in contact with the specialist might well diminish.

I welcome that, because it will mean a further diminution in the necessity for the leading consultants' units to be within easy reach of Harley street, which, of course, is why most of the great teaching hospitals grew up where they did. It is an anachronism to have such a concentration of elderly—or antique, if one likes—specialisms in such a small area. It is conceivable, and I am sure that it is true, that there are probably too many managers in the NHS at the moment, but I do not see that as anything other than a necessary temporary phase, for a variety of reasons.

Before we take the numbers as an absolute, let us remember that many of the new managers are specialists —medical, nursing, speech therapy or whatever—and have taken on a management function and been given a management title. The idea that they have become a different breed is nonsense. In the early stages of turning around an NHS that did not have the faintest idea how much any of its procedures or operations cost, we are bound to require a good crop of managers while we put in place the systems that are needed to work out that cost.

One source of great aggravation and hostility to the NHS reforms is that, for the first time, consultants are finding that their time is being managed. Far too often in the past, consultants were able to slip out of the hospital for long periods, leaving the responsibility with their junior staff. Of course, many have been enormously conscientious and work all the hours that God sends, but a whole crop among them have not.

One of the best features of the NHS reforms has been the transfer of the consultant contract from the regional health authority to the local unit that worries about where its most expensive members of staff are. The other element of management that is new is the serious attempt to manage the assets of the hospital as a whole. In the past, consultants had beds and, if they had a good working relationship with one of their fellow consultants, they might allow them to make use of it if they were not using it. There have been many examples in the past when beds were managed not as part of a hospital's total assets but simply as part of a consultant's assets. That is a substantial potential change for the better.

The fact remains that we can see self-interest or vested interest when it appears in the debate. The Labour party has moved the motion out of naked self-interest. Every citizen wants to be healthy, preferably at no cost to themselves in terms of either cash or self-discipline. As none of us looks forward to getting old, and as each of us has a friend or relative who is old, ill or in pain, it is easy to strike a sentimental chord. We know that there is never as much resource as we could use in the national health service, so it is easy to create fear, anger or demand—and the Labour party cynically chooses to do so in the run-up to the local elections. Votes are one self-interest.

Another self-interest is the grip that the national health service unions have on the service, which is being shaken by the reforms, and that of the British Medical Association. Unison—that is a curious misnomer—used to enjoy the privilege of striking when it suited. The professional associations generally lead the clamour for the status quo.

The status quo consists of a bland acceptance of the myth that all the ancient teaching centres are equally effective, whereas it is clear that the quality of the research done in some of those centres is very uneven, and some of it is downright poor. A good deal of the teaching in those centres no longer deserves the reputation that it enjoys.

The status quo consists of expensive services being provided where people no longer live. Sometimes it consists of a dependence on the old boy network, which certainly needs to be re-examined. It also consists of a concentration of services in inner London, to the detriment of services elsewhere, in areas such as mine, to which the people who used to live in London have now moved out, as the hon. Member for Islington, North said.

In Medway, we welcome the Government's courage to make changes. They have announced that £45 million will be spent on the Medway hospital. My three Medway colleagues and I are glad to welcome that. That £45 million will lead to the closure of beds and units, and I welcome that as well.

The paediatricians in All Saints, Chatham, who have coped magnificently in the passages of the old workhouse, will rejoice that, in a few years' time, they will be working in a new building in a modern hospital complex. I am prepared to bet that there will be a public outcry against the closure of All Saints, Chatham—that old workhouse—because it is in the nature of people who have been in hospital and come out well to feel a warmth towards that institution, which leads them to protest when it is closed, despite the fact that closure frequently leads to better provision somewhere else.

[Mr. Andrew Rowe]

One of the other consequences of the reforms has been the state-of-the-art oncology unit in Maidstone. We are also grateful for that. We shall soon see local centres of excellence growing up all over the country, rather than concentrated in a few large cities. We know that it can be done. Papworth hospital, Stoke Mandeville hospital, the hospital of East Grinstead, and Leeds general hospital have all shown how centres of excellence can be created well outside London. Modern technology will make that easier.

I also welcome the good news unit which the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) was so pleased to rubbish. Nothing destroys morale more fundamentally than to have one's service portrayed as constantly in crisis, as Labour spend its life doing. Staff at all levels welcome good news. They welcome the chance to borrow successful ideas from each other and to show off their own. I hope that the flow of good news will swell until it drowns out the Jeremiahs in the Labour party.

Fortunately, the go-ahead, thoughtful professionals recognise the need for change, and the professional associations are finding themselves either increasingly co-operative or increasingly outflanked. Those that are being outflanked turn to the Labour party, which is as far away from being go-ahead and thoughtful as it is possible to be.

Of course, they do not turn in vain. Look at what we have been given—the argument that if an organisation is old enough, it must be preserved, and a total refusal even to consider the consequence of a fall in population from 10 million to 7 million. Labour have complete amnesia about the 25 reviews of London's health service which have taken place this century, and we now have a demand for yet another review. The Labour party resembles an old people's home, an elephant's graveyard and a place where radical ideas go to die.

Finally, the national health service reforms in London are behind the rest of the country. What we need to see in London is the sort of development that we have seen in my part of the world, where, for example, with skilful management and good co-operation among our primary healthcare trust, our acute care trust, the general practitioners and social services, we now have a team working together to ensure that, when patients are discharged from hospital, they are properly looked after in the community, and that no patient leaves hospital without having full arrangements made for that discharge. That is absolutely right. I share Florence Nightingale's view:

"Never think you have done anything for the sick of London until you have nursed them in their own home."

7.36 pm

Mr. Jim Dowd (Lewisham, West): The speech of the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) was startling for its insensitivity and lack of appreciation of the problems facing London. If we are to believe Tory Members' claim that the population has moved away and the health care patterns have not, we would be witnessing a surfeit of services for the people of London—they would be spoilt for choice. There would be so much concentrated here to serve so few that people would be tripping over available beds in hospitals. The reverse is true, and that is why we asked for this debate today. Many of my hon. Friends wish to speak, so I shall chop my comments as much as I can, which I am sure will be appreciated by everyone.

I was a member of the area health authority for Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark—I was first appointed in 1976. I subsequently served on the Lewisham and North Southwark district health authority, as it became known. I have therefore been closely involved in the development of health care in south-east London for a number of years. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), I shall make a few personal and domestic comments.

My sister and brother were born in the early 1950s under the aegis of the home care delivery unit at Lewisham hospital. My younger brother was born at King's College hospital. A few years later, my father died at Guy's, my mother died at King's College hospital, my daughter was born in Beckenham hospital, her son was born in Farnborough hospital, I had a nephew born in Lewisham hospital last year, and, sadly, my father-in-law died in Hither Green last October.

Fortunately, on the only occasion that I have ever had to be admitted for in-patient surgery, I attended St. Thomas's hospital for a bone graft about 30 years ago. I say that simply to show that my involvement in health care services in south-east London is both deep in political terms and personal in the way in which they have supported me and my family over many decades.

When we discuss health, and I am able to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I never lose the opportunity to point out that the Tory attitude to the health service is grossly compromised by the fact that the Tory party was against its establishment in the first place. All those years ago, the Tories opposed it.

Mr. Duncan Smith *rose—*

Mr. Dowd: I will give way in a moment, but I am more inclined to give way to hon. Members who have been here for a considerable time, rather than to those who merely flit in and out.

The Tories are embarrassed because they opposed the establishment of the NHS. It has never been made plain at what stage that view changed and when they suddenly became its supporters. They would like us to believe that they are its instinctive and natural supporters, but the truth is very much the reverse.

Their experience is sad because the health service is the one area of public life in which the freebooting, rabid ideology of the right-wing element that holds the modern Conservative party prisoner cannot give that ideology full rein. It is the one area which accords most strongly with the highest ideals and fundamental needs of the British people, and the one area which affords the Conservatives the greatest difficulty.

Mr. Duncan Smith: I have been in a Standing Committee since the debate opened, which is why I was not present for earlier speeches. The hon. Gentleman says that the Conservatives were against the establishment of the health service, which is not true. The reality is that the doctors also opposed its establishment, yet we do not hear any condemnation of them, so the hon. Gentleman is making a spurious point.

Mr. Dowd: As most doctors are card-carrying Tories, it is hardly surprising that they opposed it. *[Interruption.]* That is my experience and recollection of 40 years ago.

Mr. McCartney: They are in favour of it now.

Mr. Dowd: As my hon. Friend makes plain, their experience in the intervening 40 years has caused them to reconsider their view with some rapidity and regret.

To listen to Conservative Members, one would think that there had never been any reviews of the health service in London, or any changes in hospital formation and deployment. When I first joined the area health authority about 18 years ago, there were more than 16 hospitals in Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark. Today, there are only four, or one quarter of that figure. That is why we were so concerned about the proposal to reduce it to three.

Change is an ever-present factor in London. It is bogus and completely bizarre for Conservative Members to try to pretend that that has never been the case and that they were the first to propose a far-reaching and dynamic view of Londoners' health care needs.

Conservative Members have said that no change is not an option. They recite it like a mantra—I suppose that it keeps them happy. It is not an option in any walk of life. Change is permanent, especially in large organisations such as the health service, and it has to continue. Any competent manager in an organisation, whether public, private or any other kind, must consider its position in the changing circumstances of the world. Change is a perpetual element of the management of any service.

What we will not believe—but what we are being asked to—is that we must accept the Government's and the Secretary of State's recipe for what form that change should take. We resent that and we reject it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker) mentioned the absence of a strategic health authority for London, although we seem to be moving slowly towards one with all the reorganisations under successive Conservative Governments. We are now down to two regional health authorities covering London—one in the north and one in the south. The next stage will be the transition to a single health authority for London, which will benefit from it. That regional view of health care needs will make the preparation and consideration of plans for London far easier.

Mr. Spearing: I think that we all want a London hospital authority that is directly accountable to Londoners. After all, London has a higher population than Scotland. However, does my hon. Friend agree that the North Thames and South Thames regional health authorities extend well beyond the London area, to the south coast in one direction and well into the south midlands in the other? The Government are therefore not heading in the direction that we had both hoped.

Mr. Dowd: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. I was saying that there had been movement in that direction, and that the next stage would be to recognise that London has needs that cannot be dealt with in the same breath as Brighton's or Bedford's. However, I accept my hon. Friend's point.

The Tomlinson report was a substitute, because of the lack of an organisation able to give that strategic view. Tomlinson was forced on the Government because of the colossal damage that was being done to the acute sector of the health service in London by the so-called reforms and the emergence of the internal market. As my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) said, the Conservatives have wasted the opportunity that that report provided.

I was a member of the health authority when the flagship trust of Guy's and Lewisham was created. The Lewisham end of the operation was certainly told that it could survive only with a closer, umbilical link with Guy's, and that if it tried to go it alone, it would have no future.

There was a totally bogus consultation exercise. The health authority, of which I was a member at the time, undertook that the consultants would each be given a vote on whether the Lewisham and Guy's trust should be created in 1990. They were asked whether they wanted the flagship trust to be established.

Some of us managed to get a second question put on the ballot paper. We asked whether the Government's planned reforms of the health service would be in the best interests of patient care. The consultants—highly skilled and knowledgeable people, who one imagined knew what they were voting for—voted by a majority of two to one for the formation of the trust, which subsequently came to pass. About 200 or so took part in the ballot.

However, they voted by four to one against the premise that the Government's proposals to change care would be in the best interests of patients. I felt, to put it mildly, that it was an act of considerable hypocrisy, but they felt that they could do naught else.

The flagship set sail, but we now know what came to pass. The flagship has been scuttled; it was sailing under a flag of convenience and nothing more. When a greater imperative fell upon the Department of Health, it decided that Guy's needed to go in with St Thomas's. However, as I said on the last occasion that I spoke on the matter in this Chamber, the Guy's and St Thomas's merger was nothing more than a mask for the closure of one of the two. We now know which one.

It also decided that Lewisham was well placed to go it alone. The recommendation said that it was extremely well placed to survive as an individual, independent trust, which is the very reverse of what it had been told not three years before by exactly the same people. Either they were lying in 1990 or they are lying now, because both cannot be true—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members on both sides forget the word lying? As I have said before from the Chair, it leads us all into difficulties, and there are ways to rephrase it.

Mr. Dowd: Very well, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I accept your admonishment. Both statements could not have been true, as they were only three years apart.

I heard the Prime Minister mention Lewisham hospital in glowing terms today, as did the Secretary of State. Their optimism and their glowing remarks were not founded on one whit of knowledge about what is happening there.

I wrote to the hospital on behalf of a constituent who was waiting for an operation. Sadly, although the constituent was in pain, having waited a considerable time for treatment, the case was not out of the ordinary. The final paragraph of the letter that I received from the consultant ear, nose and throat surgeon says:

"In the light of the Secretary of State's recent announcements regarding Health Service provision for London, I would suggest that you join the campaign for the maintenance of medical and surgical beds in our vicinity as the problem for delivering services to your patients will increase substantially. While this may only put a strain on the community for those patients with recurrent

[Mr. Dowd]

infections, it will undoubtedly lead to the premature death of others, permanent disability for some and great sadness for those who are their dependants."

I have a copy of a report from the chief executive of Lewisham hospital, who was given an NHS leadership award—whatever that is—not long ago. Apparently only nine were given out, and she was one of only three women to receive one. I have come to the conclusion that nowadays the upper ranks of the NHS—the world of senior managers and accountants—resemble the Mad Hatter's tea party, in that everyone wins and all must have prizes, while those on the front line providing care are given redundancy notices. That is certainly happening in Lewisham.

As both the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State went out of their way to say how enthusiastic people in Lewisham were about what is happening, let me read a small part of that report:

"From Lewisham's perspective, despite the continued confirmation of our secure future as a 'fixed point' in South East London, (as emphasised by SELHA, Tomlinson and the Secretary of State) the reality feels somewhat different. Over the last four years, we have made savings of between 4 per cent. and 7 per cent. per annum to live within the available income and to fund from our own resources . . . This has resulted in staff reductions each year—a difficult action for a busy hospital to take, but one which we continue to believe necessary given our commitment to improving the range and quality of services we provide, and the need for financial stability to avoid in-year problems. At the same time, the hospital's clinical workload continues to rise. Unlike other hospitals"—

I hope that Conservative Members will pay particular heed to this—

"we are not experiencing a drift of patients away from Lewisham, (reflecting the predominantly local nature of our workload) indeed we currently have the busiest A and E department and the highest proportion of emergency workload in South East London. Our frustration results from our being unable to see recognition and support for what we are trying to achieve in the context of an extremely fluid external environment. You will be well aware of the pressure Lewisham was under last winter—we have every reason to believe that this winter will be similar . . . Our frustration is encapsulated by the lack of a shared vision of how acute services should be shaped over the next few years . . . Our arguments for much-needed capital investment at Lewisham have been well supported, but there is no sense of how Commissioners will support this growing level of demand through contracts and income . . . We continue to believe that the service, quality and financial arrangements all point to the need to reduce the number of major . . . sites to three, but can understand the overwhelming lack of public confidence in this view, given the lack of recognition and support for the pressures that hospitals like Lewisham are facing even now."

Those are the people who were in the front rank in the establishment of trusts. They are the true believers, not the moaning Minnies and carpers; they wanted to get on and make the new health care market work. That is what they are saying now about the position in which the acute services of south-east London's hospitals have been placed.

Much of what the Government have done in London has seriously undermined the principles of the national health service, and seriously shaken public belief in the kind of service that is being provided. A constituent of mine went, with his wife, to discuss the possible removal of a metal plate that had been inserted because of an earlier injury. They were told that that was not possible. In a letter, my constituent wrote:

"This has made my wife quite worried because no mention of these complications had been commented on previously. Of course one has to listen to the advice and have faith in their doctors but with all the financial and budget problems, especially at the end of the financial year, in the back of our minds we have this constant worry, is it really down to medical reasons"—

or, asks my constituent, is the non-removal due to lack of finances?

That is typical of the doubts and suspicions put into the minds of patients by—[HON. MEMBERS: "You."] I was going to say, by the current disposition of the health service. Health service workers have written about it in the light of their own experience at a real hospital: real people are saying real things. If Conservative Members are too stupid to absorb that, I suggest that they go out of here more often, rather than less, and actually speak to some of those people.

Yesterday, I received a letter from my local general practice enclosing information received from the Guy's and Lewisham trust. It states:

"I am horrified to think that we are expected to behave in the way suggested by the Guy's and Thomas's Trust."

The practice wants to display a tariff brochure in the surgery. It resembles a holiday brochure: it shows all the possible medical procedures, giving the prices and even including the wholesale rates for bulk purchasing. It also wants to place a card in local surgeries, advertising the Guy's-St. Thomas's special deal for private patients. On the back is written,

"Please display this notice on your patient notice board."

The GP says:

"It does not take much imagination to realise the massive bureaucracy which is being created to run all this. I remember when the Labour Party said the Health Service was being privatised they were laughed at. If this is not going a long way towards it I don't know what is. You may rest assured these brochures will wind up in my bin."

I will write and thank her.

The Government's problem with the health service in London is that, despite all the flannel and all the noise, Londoners do not believe them. The people of London realise what is happening to their NHS; they know who is responsible. They will make the Conservative party pay a heavy price for the damage it has done to some of the finest centres of medical excellence anywhere in the world.

7.55 pm

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): I shall return in a moment to the anecdotes of the hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Dowd), which did not impress me. I wish that he—like the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker)—had referred to the greatest danger to health in London, which without doubt is smoking. According to the Government's White Paper, "The Health of the Nation",

"At least 80 per cent. of lung cancer is associated with smoking, some 26,000 deaths a year."

That would be nearly 3,000 in London.

"On top of this, the habit kills more than twice as many people than other diseases. It has been estimated that among an average 1,000 young adults who smoke cigarettes regularly; about one will be murdered, about six will be killed on the roads, but about 250 will be killed before their time by tobacco. Despite the substantial fall in smoking prevalence over the last twenty years, smoking remains the largest single cause of preventable mortality in England."

Ms Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): The hon. Gentleman is making a very good point, but can he explain why his Government refuse to ban tobacco advertising?

Mr. Jessel: That is a matter for the whole House, and I hope that the whole House will support the private Member's Bill next month. It seems to me that in 50 or 100

years' time future generations will think that we were absolutely batty to allow this poison to go on destroying so many young lives. We know from the Royal College of Physicians that, of every cohort of 1,300 15-year-olds in any constituency of whom a quarter smoke, a third of that quarter will, at the current rate, die from smoking or smoking-related diseases. We must get a grip: this is a cross-party matter, and I hope that we shall deal with it before long.

The central point of the motion is whether London's health service cares properly for patients. So far, the debate has largely been on the producer side—about provision, money, the number of beds, buildings, institutions and how it all looks from the point of view of doctors and nurses, administrators and other national health service workers. There has been comparatively little in the debate about the consumer point of view—the point of view of patients.

What patients want, above all, is to stay alive for as long as possible. We should not mince our words about this. We all have to die sometime, but most people want above all else to delay the onset of death. Death is the great enemy, and to defer it must be the prime object of the NHS. Nothing else, such as the control of pain, is anything like so important.

In the Gilbert and Sullivan opera, "The Yeoman of the Guard", the character Fairfax, who is under sentence of death, sings:

"Is life a boon?
If so, it must befall
That Death, whene'er he call,
Must call too soon."

He was a young man who was awaiting execution, and sometimes the young say that they do not want to live over the age of 80. They may feel different when they are 79.

These days, thanks to better health in London and the rest of the country, far more people survive to reach old age. That is also true at the other end of the age spectrum. The infant mortality rate—the number of babies who die before they are one year old—was 11.2 per thousand in 1981. By 1991, it had dropped by one third to 7.4 per thousand. That is by any standard a substantial and significant improvement in the health of babies and in their survival rate.

At the other end of the scale, the expectation of life for a person aged 70 is 11 years for a man and 14 years for a woman, and it is going up by nearly one year every five years. Deaths from pneumonia dropped by a half from about 54,000 in 1981 to 28,000 in 1991, and that is an enormous improvement.

In 1981, the year in which we brought in the compulsory wearing of seat belts in the front seats of cars —I played an active part in that, as you may recall, Madam Deputy Speaker—there were 5,500 deaths in car accidents. By last year, that had dropped to 4,500—a drop of about 20 per cent.—despite a substantial increase in traffic in that decade.

The national health service in London, as elsewhere, has other objects—preventing pain, respite care, care in minor illnesses and so on—but the prevention of death must always be the main one.

The King's Fund report published in 1992—I have had a quick look at the report published in April, which does not in any way contradict the 1992 report—refers to the health of Londoners.

The report refers to the health of Londoners. It comes to some definite conclusions which have not been contradicted by anything that has come out since. The report says that the rate of mortality due to all causes within the capital is better than elsewhere. It also says that London districts have consistently and significantly lower levels of mortality from circulatory diseases, lung cancer, cervical cancer and motor vehicle traffic accidents. However, it also says that London districts have significantly worse records of mortality due to avoidable breast cancer and suicide. The report states that Londoners as a whole experience significantly fewer illnesses and symptoms as do residents of comparable areas, and that the overall health of Londoners is no worse—and may indeed be better—than that of people in similar parts of the country.

We all know how Opposition Members will react to such information. If they see that health is better in some way in London than in the rest of the country, they will argue that the rest of country is deprived. If they see that health in some other respects is better in the rest of the country, they will argue that London is deprived. Of course, it is impossible to bring about precise equality in the matters because there will be variations in the incidence of smoking or in the consumption of cholesterol-carrying food in different parts of the country. One is bound to get some variations.

It is established in the report that general health in London is no worse than in the rest of the country. What matters in the end is how healthy people are and what their prospects are for survival and for the avoidance of illness and pain, rather than building up the interests of professional people and institutions.

We know from the debate that the number of beds is no longer to be seen as a crucial factor in looking after any given number of people. It is little short of dishonest to make the number of beds the main yardstick.

That is partly because of the increasing amount of day care. I obtained today a comparison of day cases with all admissions at the West Middlesex university hospital—it is not in my constituency, but it serves it—which compared 1992-1993 with 1993-94. In gynaecology, 22 per cent. of cases were day cases—a figure of 666—in 1992-1993. In 1993-94, the year just ended, it had increased by a massive 32 per cent. to 54 per cent., and the number of day cases for gynaecological operations was 1,714.

I could give other examples, and I have picked the most striking one. In ear, nose and throat cases, 10 per cent. were day cases in 1992-1993. In 1993-94, they had nearly doubled to 18 per cent. An ever-increasing number of treatments require only day care, and do not require a patient to stay the night. For those treatments for which in-patient treatment is needed for acute cases, the patients often need a shorter stay than they would have needed 10, 20 or 30 years ago. A heart bypass operation will now often require a patient to spend 11 or 12 days in hospital, whereas 10 or 15 years ago the patient might have required 15 or 18 days in hospital. Smaller operations—either gynaecological ones which still require an overnight stay, varicose veins or hernias—very often entail a one-night stay in hospital, whereas a generation ago people went into hospital for three or four days. That is a major factor.

It is not just that the population of Greater London has declined by 12 to 15 per cent. in the last 30 or 40 years. That, I may say, is a secondary factor, although it is frequently cited.

I shall mention certain particular hospitals in which I am interested. The first is the Teddington Memorial hospital in my constituency, which is the smallest national health

[Mr. Jessel]

service trust hospital in the country. The amount of local support that it attracts is extraordinary. Its league of friends produced £2 million to augment the national health service provision for my constituents who use it. Kingston and Richmond, the local district health authority—the purchasing authority—has just agreed that it should provide all 49 of its beds as general practitioner beds, instead of the previous figure of 27.

Ten years ago, the hospital was going to close. I took a delegation to see the then Minister for Health, now my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and he decided to intervene in the decision to close the hospital which had been made by what was then the Hounslow and Spelthorne district health authority. The hospital is now flourishing, and the support continues. its position as a trust hospital is provisional: it is on a two-year trial; we have gone slightly over the first year of that trial. I draw its success to the attention of the Minister for Health and I hope that at the end of the debate he will say something encouraging about its future.

The other national health service hospital in my constituency, St. Mary's hospital, Hampton, is a smaller community hospital. Last month, I took a delegation to see the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) about that hospital, which is not being provided with the support that it needs to continue providing GP beds. Its use is to be changed to provide care for the mentally ill, with priority given to mentally ill Hampton residents. The hospital has drawn tremendous support from its league of friends and local people. Will the Minister take a last look at whether its current use could be saved, as it is cherished and has tremendous community support?

As the borough of Richmond has no general hospital, my constituents go to several different general hospitals outside the borough. I have already mentioned the West Middlesex University hospital. Some constituents go to Kingston hospital, Queen Mary's University hospital, Roehampton, Charing Cross hospital or Hammersmith— *[Interruption.]* I believe that all those hospitals will survive.

My constituents are intelligent enough to know that what matters is the treatment that they receive from the national health service and whether their illnesses will be cured so that they will survive and live to an old age. They see that the treatment is primarily provided by professional individuals and that the importance of buildings is secondary. I hope that in the rest of this debate, therefore, Opposition Members will show a little more appreciation for that common-sense point of view. When discussing health in London or any other part of the country, what really matters is the health of individuals who are treated by professionals.

We have made tremendous strides against waste in the national health service, but I still believe that more can be done. First, far too many people have cupboards and drawers filled with half-used bottles of medicines and pills. The British are a nation of medicine wasters. We need a change in culture and public attitude to that. The system of GPs holding budgets provides an incentive to GPs to be more careful not to prescribe wastefully. I wish to insult nobody in the medical profession: I have three doctors in my family, two of whom are GPs and I frequently argue that point with them and, in the end, they admit that I am right. Everyone knows that I am right. Too much medicine is wasted.

Secondly, too much consultants' time is wasted. A consultant orthopaedic surgeon at the West Middlesex hospital told me recently that some 20 per cent. of the patients due to consult him are what an airline would call "no shows". A monstrous amount of valuable time of consultant orthopaedic surgeons or any other doctor is wasted by patients who are too idle, careless, inconsiderate or selfish to ring up and say that they cannot come so that some other patient can be slotted in. We should analyse the extent of that wasted time and try to achieve within the national health service a system of sticks and carrots to ensure that such patients are more considerate to other people who wish to make proper use of the time of consultant doctors.

I could say much more on this subject, but I know that other hon. Members are hoping to speak. I am grateful for this opportunity to address the House on the national health service in London. Longevity is increasing, health is improving, and Opposition Members should try a little harder to see the wood from the trees.

8.14 pm

Mrs. Bridget Prentice (Lewisham, East): I am both pleased and saddened to have an opportunity to speak in this debate on the national health service in London. I am pleased that Opposition Members have a chance to put London's case, which the Secretary of State has avoided for so long, but I am saddened that we should have to do so.

London Members could list case after case from our constituencies of people who have waited for months, if not years, for treatment, who have been returned to their homes too early, who have not been treated because of their age or who have been on waiting lists for too long because GP fundholders can jump the queue thanks to the two-tier health service. We could cite horrendous cases of people on trolleys in accident and emergency wards for hours on end, people whose coats have been used as pillows because insufficient pillows have been available and people whose families have had to provide food and drink because staff on the wards are too overworked to do so. There are examples like that every day of every week in London hospitals and Opposition Members are painfully aware of them. If they thought about it, Conservative Members, too, would be as aware. That is the state of the national health service in Europe's largest capital city. What an indictment of the Government's policies and the Secretary of State's handling of health in London.

I wish to look at the broad picture described by those who responded to the London Labour Members' inquiry into health care, and then say what is happening in my area. I shall not say how or why we conducted that inquiry, as that has been adequately covered by my hon. Friends the Members for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker) and for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). Let me emphasise that London is not over-bedded, as both Professor Jarman and the Government's figures have pointed out. Will the Minister assure us that all hospital and bed closures will now cease so that a proper review can take place? If the Health Secretary did that, she might restore some of her seriously diminished credibility in London.

The Secretary of State made great play of funding for mentally ill provision in London, yet she totally ignored the Mental Health Commission's report, which said that there was a grave shortage of beds not only in inner cities generally but particularly in London. My hon. Friends the Members for Lewisham, West (Mr. Dowd) and for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) and I spoke last Friday to the chair and chief executive of Lewisham and Guy's Mental Health trust. They raised a number of concerns, the first of which related to disturbed children. They believe that they are reaching only one in 10 of the disturbed children in the local population. It does not take much imagination to work out the consequences of that. They were concerned about the serious blockages of beds and the problems that that raised and they were adamant that we must halt the reduction in the number of acute beds.

We asked those people directly whether there were enough beds for Lewisham's population and their answer was a categorical no. That has extremely serious consequences. A lack of beds means that voluntary admissions are increasingly difficult. That creates enormous problems not just for individual patients but for those who surround and support them. Lewisham and Guy's Mental Health trust said that it was forced to use private beds for people detained under the Mental Health Act 1983 and that 50 per cent. of the patients in Lewisham are detained under that Act, compared with only 7 per cent. nationally. Hither Green hospital in my constituency is part of the service that provides for those patients. Many such patients cannot get in Lewisham the in-patient treatment that they would get elsewhere in the country, so all the talk from Conservative Members about overprovision in London is simply not true.

The chief executive and the chair of the mental health trust also talked about forensic beds. They said that they had had to put nine people into private beds at a cost of £80,000 per person per year in order adequately to look after those people. Is that the best use of NHS resources in London? I think not, and they think not. The chief executive and the chair said that they needed at least 15 more beds. That is not many to ask for, but it would make an enormous difference to the quality of care provided for our constituents.

The chief executive and chair recognise, as we do, that part of the problem lies not with the Department of Health but with the Home Office, which is transferring people from the criminal justice system into the health service without transferring the funds to go with them. What negotiations has the Minister or the Secretary of State had with the Home Secretary about ensuring that those funds are forthcoming?

The Secretary of State berated us about accident and emergency units and mentioned in particular the accident and emergency unit in Lewisham and its funding. I shall return to that subject, but wish to mention a survey—conducted by the Royal College of Nursing in January on overnight stays in accident and emergency units—which produced some horrifying results. Outside London, the chances of an overnight wait were one in five, but in London, 50 per cent. of patients were likely to stay overnight in an accident and emergency unit.

The Royal College of Nursing's survey included representations from two London hospitals. The first stated:

"Two to eight patients stay overnight in the department every night, the waiting room has become a mini ward. Most patients wait about 24 hours for a bed. Recently, the problem has become worse due to bed closures."

Another London hospital stated:

"Four to eight people stay in the department overnight on a regular basis. The situation has become worse over the last few months, due to bed closures. The wait for a bed can be 24 to 36 hours."

Those problems are important because they have a direct effect on patients' health.

The Royal College of Nursing is concerned that waiting on trolleys in accident and emergency units will cause a deterioration in patients' health. It gives examples of the complications that arise due to pressure sores. It talks about the use on trolleys of mattresses that are not designed for long-term occupancy. It says that people who might have fallen and fractured their hip are well on the way to developing pressure sores before being admitted to an accident and emergency department, and temporary mattresses will exacerbate the problem. Such events are occurring in London hospitals day in, day out and night in, night out. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Ms Jowell), who unfortunately cannot be here today as she is ill herself. She has done sterling work in studying what is happening at casualty departments throughout London's hospitals.

I shall briefly mention Lewisham and Hither Green hospitals. I shall not describe in detail the problems facing my constituents who have had to wait as operation after operation has been cancelled. I shall not go into the details of my constituent Mrs. Rew who, at 78 years of age, broke her arm and had to wait 31 hours without being told what would happen to her. She had little to eat and it was only thanks to the intervention of her daughter that any action was taken. I shall not go into detail about my constituent Mrs. Mountfield who suffered a detached retina during a cataract operation at Greenwich. Her general practitioner tried to send her to St. Mary's in Sidcup, but three weeks later she was told that she could not be treated there as she came from outside the area.

I want to nail the myth perpetrated by the Secretary of State about Lewisham's accident and emergency department. As my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West said, it is the busiest accident and emergency department in south London, handling some 71,000 cases a year—40 per cent. of the total in the south-east region. The £4 million that the Secretary of State said was being invested in Lewisham's accident and emergency unit was invested only to cope with the extra expense needed as a result of the closure of other south-east London units.

Lewisham has the only 24-hour accident and emergency department for children—an important and unique provision. We must ask the Minister how Lewisham's accident and emergency department will cope when Guy's hospital closes. There is to be an expansion in capital projects at the accident and emergency unit. Where will the money come from to pay for the revenue costs of that unit? Unless the Government fund those costs, we shall have an unused, empty white elephant. What good will that be to the people of Lewisham and beyond?

How can Lewisham hospital be expected to provide the quality of care that we have come to expect when 70 staff —50 of whom are skilled and experienced nurses—are to be sacked? My hon. Friends and I met the management of Lewisham hospital last week. They told us that they were £2.5 million adrift, which was why they were sacking

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nurses. They told us about the accident and emergency department, but said that they did not have the revenue to fund it.

I have mentioned the unique accident and emergency provision for children. Of the nurses to be sacked, two are paediatric night staff at the accident and emergency unit. How can sacking them improve the quality of care for children in Lewisham and beyond? What will happen to the 24-hour service now? Other nurses to be sacked include 12 grade E nurses who look after the elderly and younger disabled people at Hither Green hospital. They have been told that they will be sacked, but can apply for jobs as care assistants. There is something fundamentally rotten about a system that allows that to happen.

The hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), who is no longer present, talked about what most saps morale in London hospitals. What saps morale most is being handed a redundancy notice by a hospital that cannot match its budget. We know that the system is wrong. We have spoken to the commissioning agents and asked them to talk to the Lewisham trust to prevent the redundancies. We support the nursing and support staff in their fight to save their jobs, which is why we joined the demonstration yesterday. We are fighting to save those jobs, not just because the nurses and support staff deserve to keep their jobs but because we do not believe that the people of Lewisham will benefit if the jobs disappear. On the contrary, their health care provision will become decidedly worse.

As in life, much of politics is about perception. The perception of the people of London is that the Government are incompetent and do not care about their needs or aspirations. Their perceptions are the same as those of the members of the Royal College of Nursing, who today described the Secretary of State for Health as blind and deaf to the needs of the health service. Their perceptions tell them that the Government cannot and will not look after the national health service in London. Their perceptions tell them that they can no longer trust the Government with their health service. That is why they will vote against the Conservative Government and the Conservative party next week.

8.28 pm

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): I welcome the opportunity to participate in the debate. I intend to draw the focus of the debate on to outer London health and hospital services whose voice has not been sufficiently heard so far in the debate. I particularly want to mention the outer London hospital, Barnet general hospital, which serves so many of my constituents in south Hertfordshire.

We have had a debate on inner London health services and the strategic arguments relating to them. I welcome the fact that we are having a debate about the health service in London, which comes on top of the long-running debate about inner London's hospitals and acute care in inner London. When I saw that the debate was tabled for today I thought that it was not a complete coincidence that it should take place at approximately the same time as the local government elections. My suspicions increased when the spokesman for the Opposition in today's debate was not the health spokesman, but the transport spokesman and the co-ordinator of Labour's London elections.

My suspicions were confirmed in greater force by the contribution of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). I was surprised by the extent to which he totally ignored all the familiar strategic arguments about the future of London's health care which were put forward in the Tomlinson report, the King's Fund report and the 18 other reports. Instead we had a ramble, familiar to connoisseurs of pre-election Labour efforts, around Labour's over-emotional and over-hyped approach to the health service.

Many of the hon. Gentleman's arguments were not ones which I have come across before in the debate. He took even my breath away when he made a comparison between the health service and the police force, because I have not seen such a comparison in any of the reports or debates. If that is the sort of grasp of strategic comparison that the hon. Gentleman has, in the highly unlikely event that—heaven forbid—he were ever to be Secretary of State for Transport, I would have to make preparations to travel from Hertfordshire to Westminster by passenger ferry. His remarks were out of this world.

I suppose that I should have been on my guard when I saw the Labour motion for today's debate. Anyone who is familiar with the debate about London's health services will know that primary care lies at its heart. Today, the Labour party managed to frame a motion for this debate which omits primary care altogether. I am pleased that the amendment proposed on behalf of the Government, for which I will willingly vote, highlights primary care. It is absolutely right that primary care should be the starting point for a debate about inner London health services.

I agreed with some of the contribution of the hon. Member for Islington, South (Mr. Corbyn) when he spoke about health status and health conditions in London. However, he did not go on to make the connection which I think that he could have made between those conditions and the state of primary care in London. That connection has been acknowledged not only in the Tomlinson report but in many of the other 18 reports released over many years.

Primary care in London lags well behind primary care in outer London and in the rest of the country. Those people who seek primary care in inner London are likely to be seen by a single general practitioner who is likely to be older, whose premises are likely to be much more inadequate than those in other parts of the country, and who is less likely to be able to offer them the same sorts of preventive measures and other forms of health care as general practitioners in other parts of the country are able to offer.

Primary health care measures such as minor surgery, screening, and immunisation for children are much less prevalent in inner London. I think that that important fact should be highlighted in this debate and the starting point of the debate should be how we will improve primary care.

The hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker), who has been assiduously following the debate, posed the question: is there any link between primary care and the use of acute services in inner London hospitals? He said that he did not think that there was a link. In his absence, I hope that he will not mind if I address the point. I asked the same question when, as a member of the Health Select Committee, I heard Sir Bernard Tomlinson give evidence. I should like to draw the attention of the House to Sir Bernard's reply to me in that hearing. He said:

"If primary care in London were readily accessible to more people, you would certainly relieve the intolerable strains we have witnessed in some A and E departments that are almost daily filled to overflowing. The seriousness of that is not that those that are there really for primary care cannot be dealt with adequately but that patients who really have pressing needs may have to wait a very long time to be seen."

He concluded:

"We do think there is a strong assumption that can be made that better primary care will deal with patients who, under circumstances of poor primary care, may well require hospital admission."

There is plenty of other evidence to support Sir Bernard's contention. I invite Opposition Members to look at the consequences of the absence of proper primary community care at the other end of the admission spectrum. There is plenty of evidence that the absence of adequate and effective primary and community care delays discharge from hospital. It has been estimated that between 15 and 30 per cent. of those who occupy acute care hospital beds in inner London could be cared for in more appropriate settings if they were available.

An improvement in primary and community care must occur. Such care is a more effective use of resources and it is better treatment for the patients concerned. Inevitably, that will create a change in the pattern of provision of health services in London and will reduce the demand for acute services.

As both Professor Tomlinson and the other reports have pointed out, at the same time other factors are likely to accelerate the trend towards a decreasing demand for acute services in inner London. My hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) drew on her great experience as Chairman of the Health Select Committee. She told the House about some of the visits that the Committee had made to hospitals in London and some of the technological advances Committee members had seen. I was privileged to take part in some of those visits as a member of the Committee and I agree with everything that she said about the effect that changing technology and greater efficiency will have on patients' length of stay in acute health care.

I would go perhaps even further than my hon. Friend. There is very strong reason to believe that the changes will be more pronounced in London than in the rest of the country because there is greater scope for such change in London. The King's Fund report, which has been mentioned in other contexts by Opposition Members, highlights that. The report found that

"such changes will affect all hospitals, not just those in London, because already the capital is tending to lag behind in terms of efficiency and so the scope for productivity gains is that much greater. This is by far the most significant factor identified by the Tomlinson report as impacting on the required number of beds in London. It also plays a key role in the report by the King's Fund."

I draw the attention of the House to the flow of patients into London. Opposition Members have made some derisory comments about that flow, saying that it is part and parcel of the much-derided internal market. But we did not hear a great deal of hard evidence from them about the flows and the most effective way of treating patients and deploying resources.

I invite my right hon. Friend the Minister to consider the fact that 21 per cent. of acute care beds in inner London hospitals are occupied by patients who come to inner London from outer London and outer Thames districts for acute care. Half that 21 per cent. are going into non-special health authority hospitals for the sort of routine acute care which could be available in the outlying areas. I think that that is a misapplication of resources when the cost of treatment in London, as we have heard today, is 46 per cent. higher than it is in outer districts.

That brings me to the fate of Barnet general hospital, which is of great interest to my constituents. There has always been a very strong case for the redevelopment of Barnet general hospital and I believe that that case is made even stronger and more compelling by the fact that patients will go to outer London hospitals for routine surgery when they might otherwise have gone to inner London hospitals.

The case for Barnet general hospital is a long-established one. It goes back more than 25 years when plans were first drawn up for redevelopment of the hospital. Since then, it has become something of a saga in the health service. Those plans did not come to fruition, which caused great disappointment. It was felt that other priorities took precedence; but local people in Boreham Wood, Potters Bar and Barnet thought that progress had been made when the Health Minister wrote to Barnet community health council as follows:

"We are all aware of the pressing need for better hospital facilities in the Barnet area. It is the economic situation we face which prevents us remedying Barnet's particular difficulties."

That Minister was David Owen, writing in 1975.

Since then, the redevelopment of Barnet hospital has been a continuing saga. Finally, last year, the Wellhouse Trust, which had become responsible for Barnet and Edgware hospitals, produced a proposal for the redevelopment of Edgware hospital, for the closure of the A and E department at Barnet and the transfer of patient services from there. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras got his facts wrong about that, incidentally.

Since then, there has been a change of heart by the Wellhouse Trust, and that has been widely welcomed in Barnet and my constituency. Fresh proposals have been introduced by the trust, involving a major redevelopment of Barnet hospital. I believe that they do justice to the health needs of the people in Barnet, in Hertfordshire and in the parts of Enfield that are also served by the hospital. All this is certainly in line with the long-term strengths of the hospital's case.

As one of the hon. Members, along with my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman), who supported the case for Barnet's redevelopment, I might add that a crucial factor in favour of Barnet hospital has been the role played by the purchasing health authority, which did not accept the Wellhouse Trust's original proposals. I pay tribute to the role played by the South West Hertfordshire district health authority, which took soundings of local opinion, took a view of local health needs and acted accordingly.

I believe that the purchaser/provider split played a significant role in this. Indeed, I wonder whether, without it, the trust would have accepted change so readily. Strong purchasers certainly have a great deal to offer the health service.

I urge the Minister to consider the case of Barnet general hospital and the case for outer London provision. Above all, I invite him to think about the long-term strategic factors affecting the shape of health care in London. It is not an easy subject. There are many temptations for politicians to use the opportunities presented by change such as this. Today, the Opposition succumbed to those temptations. It is interesting to note that their health spokesman was banished from the Front

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Bench today. Could that be because he said that the status quo was no longer an option, while the rest of the Opposition still argue against change?

At Question Time today, the Leader of the Opposition came along to say that the Tomlinson report was discredited. Perhaps he and the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, who also derided change, should have consulted Labour's spokesman for health in the House of Lords, Baroness Jay, who said not long ago that

"nearly everyone who has looked at London's health services agrees with Sir Bernard Tomlinson's general conclusion that some rationalisation and reorganisation should occur."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 13 December 1993; Vol. 550, c. 1221.]

The question is: will the Opposition listen to her? Will they listen to Sir Bernard or read any of the reports that have been drawn up?

Of course, Opposition Members are not interested in listening; they are interested in whatever advantage they can extract from manipulating opportunities before the local elections. They will, however, not gain a single vote as a result of their efforts today. They have merely damaged even more their long-term credibility as a party genuinely concerned about the health needs of Londoners and of outer Londoners.

Opposition Members have indulged in some badinage about Conservative Members who may lose their seats. The electorates of my constituency, Barnet and many other parts of outer and inner London will be unimpressed by the way the Opposition have sought to use this debate.

8.44 pm

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): Perhaps, in the light of the closing remarks of the hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison), this would be an opportune moment to introduce a voice not much heard in today's debate—that of the patient, the user of the national health service here in London.

A pensioner constituent of mine wrote about a hip operation as follows:

"Admission was cancelled on December 21 1993 and on February 15 of this year. I was admitted on March 15th . . . At about 11 am on the next day I was given a Pre-med. When I woke up about 90 minutes later in the ward I was absolutely horrified to discover that my hip was untouched by human hand! The next day I was sent home."

In response to a letter from me, the chief executive of the Royal Free hospital trust in my constituency, where this occurred, wrote:

"The decisions to cancel your first two admission dates on 21 December 1993 and 15 February 1994 were taken because . . . the Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon had to admit other patients as emergencies from our Accident and Emergency Department."

That, in essence, refutes the arguments adduced by the Conservative Members who actually took this debate seriously and did not attempt to use it purely for party political purposes.

The hon. Member for Hertsmere mentioned the King's Fund. Perhaps he missed today's report in the *Evening Standard*, which said that the King's Fund Institute has discovered evidence that, far from a £70 million overspend in London, London is underfunded by almost £200 million.

The one thing Londoners can be sure of is that, since the Secretary of State published her document "Making London Better", waiting lists have grown longer, proposed hospital closures have come thicker and faster, A and E units have disappeared, the number of doctors and nurses has decreased while the number of managers has increased, and, far from the capital becoming better, evidence is growing at an alarming rate to show that health provision in our city is becoming worse.

In my North East Thames region, acute hospital beds have decreased in number by 34 per cent., from 13,644 to 8,959. Department of Health figures show that in December 1993 there were 106,026 people waiting for hospital treatment, 12,805 of whom had waited more than 12 months.

Percentages and figures in thousands have become almost meaningless. My worry is that the Secretary of State in particular has lost sight of the fact that these numbers are made up of real people—a concern exacerbated when I heard today what I considered one of the most shameful performances ever by a Secretary of State at the Dispatch Box. It was shameful in its total lack of concern for the real needs of Londoners—and the most vulnerable Londoners at that.

In evidence given to the Select Committee on Health on London's health service, on Wednesday 2 March 1994, the Secretary of State asserted that among the overall objectives announced in "Making London Better" was that of preserving and enhancing London's reputation as a centre of excellence for treatment, teaching and research. As ever, Tory words are belied by Tory actions. It took a campaign organised and supported by patients, staff and hon. Members of all parties to ensure that the renal unit at the Royal Free hospital in my constituency was retained —this the hospital where the first successful kidney transplant in the world, outside the United States of America, was performed. That was despite the recommendation from the London implementation group—put in place by the Secretary of State—that it should be moved. The Royal Free is still waiting to hear whether its cancer, cardiac, paediatric and haematology units will be saved. Perhaps the Minister will answer that point directly tonight. Those threats are particular to the hospital in my constituency, but there are equivalent threats hanging over all London hospitals and the ensuing anxiety and drop in morale is felt not only by the doctors, nurses and ancillary staff, who give far more than a fair day's work for the far from fair day's pay allowed them by the Government, but also by patients.

In response to a question from the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) during the same Select Committee debate on London's health, the Secretary of State said:

"There is no doubt at all in the NHS all emergency and serious cases must be seen immediately indeed 47 per cent. of the work in London is admitted at once".

Setting aside the fact that presumably 53 per cent. of the work is not, that reply would be no comfort to my constituent, who is 71 years old and, having had an operation cancelled three times, wrote this to the Secretary of State:

"It seems likely I shall predecease my hypothetical next appointment. Is this perhaps what your department means by market forces?"

The letter was passed to Charles Marshall, chief executive of the UCH Middlesex hospitals, to whom my constituent had also written direct asking:

"Are there beds or not? Ministers seem to believe that the number of beds is excessive. If so, why are so many people still awaiting treatment?"

Mr. Marshall's reply was:

"Whether there are enough beds or not is . . . a moot point. We are of course delighted to provide as much care and open as many

beds as the district health authorities wish to purchase. They, however, are subject to cash limits and are unable to authorise us simply to respond to demand. The result is that there is an element of rationing in the system."

That is rationing care, not on the basis of need but on the basis of health authority purchasing power. The Government's initial error in pursuing the policy of an internal market for health provision is patently failing to deliver—not only to the individual patient, but to that patient's family.

A mother in my constituency had her operation cancelled. The cancellation of that operation affected not only her but her husband and her two young sons. Her operation was finally rescheduled only to be cancelled on the day she was admitted. Her husband works as a waiter and has no time off with pay, but had managed to agree unpaid leave to look after the boys and his wife during the period of bed rest that doctors said was vital for her after the operation. I am happy to say that my constituent has now had her operation.

Many health care professionals in my constituency responded to the Labour party survey on the health service in London, including the professors of preventive medicine at Bart's, of leukaemia biology at Hammersmith, of thoracic medicine at the Royal Brompton and of surgery at the Royal Marsden, the consultant physician in intensive therapy at Bart's, a consultant at the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson hospital, and several local general practitioners, including the chair of the Hampstead GPs forum. Those GPs, doctors and consultants to a person concurred with Michael Laurence, president of the orthopaedic section of the Royal Society of Medicine, when he said:

"It must be generally appreciated that a national health service is precisely what the word means, a service—not a business. It requires a communal decision by a population to do the best for every member of that population."

I should like to read a short paragraph from a letter from one of my constituents who is a doctor:

"I feel now much as the ancient Romans must have felt as the vandals, who understood little of the culture of the city, rampaged through, leaving much destruction in their wake. The aim of the NHS was, and I hope will be, to treat the sick when necessary . . . My grandfather, who was a general practitioner in Liverpool at the introduction of the NHS, thereafter refused to treat private patients in case they thought they were getting a better deal."

What a change all those of us who can remember the NHS being introduced have lived to see.

One of my constituents reminded me just how significant the creation of the NHS was for the vast majority of people in Britain. "You cannot imagine, Miss Jackson", she said,

"What it was like before when you had to wait to guess how ill your child was before you called the doctor because you were worried about his bill."

The NHS lifted that worry and the fear that it will return makes those of us in London fight so hard for what we still have.

In her shameful speech, the Secretary of State referred to issues in local elections as though they were not part and parcel of the struggle that is taking place in London to preserve the basics principles and tenets of the NHS.

London needs its hospitals, its general practices and its primary care, but good health for London requires more than that. Londoners require a home that is warm and dry and a job to pay for decent, nourishing food; a job that can pay for warmth and for the prescription charges that the Government have raised so often since coming to office. They need a job that can pay for eye tests, spectacles, dental check-ups and treatments; a job that is carried out in conditions that do not in themselves endanger health. Our older citizens need a pension that does not force them to make a choice between food or fuel and an environment that is not hazardous to health, causing all manner of chest complaints.

As our capital city, London has the problems that face Britain but on a larger scale. Londoners do not suffer from different medical conditions from citizens in the rest of Britain. They do not need different operations or different doctors, nurses or anaesthetists. The high standard of health care and the jobs and homes that Londoners need and deserve are vital, too, for those others in cities and towns across the country. To provide those things for Londoners, they will have to be provided for all in Britain. I regret that they will not be provided by the present Government.

In February this year, I wrote again to my 72-year-old constituent who had been in correspondence with the Secretary of State for Health to ask whether he would like to contribute to the Labour party's health survey. A few days later, I received the following reply:

"You sent your questionnaire to my husband but he was not well enough to respond and he has in fact died early this morning in Edenhall Marie Curie Centre, Lyndhurst Gardens. While he was there his consultant discussed it with him and took a photocopy. This is enclosed here and filled in by his doctor. It also represents my husband's views and mine. The subject is too serious for us to ignore".

How many other institutions in this country are so admired, revered and wanted that a widow would take the trouble to write to her Member of Parliament in its defence on the same day as her husband died? If the state of the NHS in London is too serious for her to ignore, the Government have no excuse for their behaviour, for the scandalous scythe they have wielded, and are still wielding, through London's health service.

8.57 pm

Mr. David Congdon (Croydon, North-East): Anyone listening to the speech of the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) or to the speeches of many other Opposition Members might find it easy to forget that the national health service is spending more than £100 million a day and is treating 8 million patients a year in hospital—1 million more than in 1990-91.

All that the Opposition can do is trot out examples of individual patients being treated badly. No hon. Member wants to see people getting less than good-quality care from the health service, but why do Opposition Members fail to quote the many excellent examples of good care that occur in the capital day in and day out? It is all too easy to find the odd bad example here and there and to forget the good ones. Even the hon. Member for Dulwich (Ms Jowell), who was unfortunately in hospital recently, had to say that she had been given good care. But she could not resist the temptation to carp about other aspects of the national health service.

As a London Member of Parliament, I am particularly interested in health issues, including the funding for health care in London. Despite the fact that some Opposition Members have sought to muddy the waters, it is beyond doubt that massive excess resources are put into the NHS in inner London. Available information shows that the expenditure in inner London is £603 per person, compared with £415 in outer London. Surely those figures themselves demonstrate the need to consider some change.

[Mr. David Congdon]

Other hon. Members have referred to general practice or primary care services and have pointed out that London does comparatively badly, with a per capita expenditure of £124 compared with £132 elsewhere. It is for those reasons that we need change in London. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) has pointed out, successive reports have shown that London has too much money tied up in expensive teaching and specialist hospitals. The pressures for change cannot be resisted any longer.

Even *The Guardian*—not a hotbed of Toryism—had to comment back in January 1993:

"Similar ideas in 20 reports going back over 100 years have been aired. Successive Labour Governments"—

that is a long time ago—

"have unsuccessfully pursued similar goals since the 1968 Royal Commission concluded that London's medical schools were too fragmented and isolated. . . . Only the ideologically blind"—

that must be a reference to Opposition Members—

"are refusing to recognise the truth, set out last year in 12 volumes of research by the King's Fund, that London's health facilities do need to change and the present surplus cannot be allowed to continue."

It is against that background that this debate should be taking place.

The pressures for change, which have existed for a very long time, are compounded by the very significant improvements in surgery techniques, which have led to much greater use of day surgery. My hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) referred to the situation in her area. Many procedures are now possible without invasive surgery. That has led to much reduced lengths of stay in hospitals in London and elsewhere.

Another very good trend, as part of the health reforms, is that more people can be treated near their homes.

All those factors show that fewer beds are needed. Opposition Members will rightly point out that there does not appear to be a surplus in London. It is true that there are problems in some parts of London. It can be difficult to get patients into some hospitals. Indeed, the less well-developed primary care is part of the difficulty, and we must strive to provide a solution. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere said, people go to accident and emergency departments when they could see the local GP.

Hospital beds are also clogged up with people waiting to be discharged. All that puts excess pressure on beds and demonstrates that we must get the balance right in London.

I congratulate the Secretary of State on taking courageous steps in terms of strategy. Because of the problems in the relationship between primary and secondary care, it is right to proceed with caution and to remember some of the warnings in the Tomlinson and King's Fund reports to the effect that changes must be implemented over a reasonable time scale.

I want to look briefly at the issue of resources for health care in London. I accept the argument that London should probably expect to have a higher than pro rata share of resources because of increased pressures there. However, it is hard to argue that London should consume 20 per cent. of resources for 15 per cent. of the population.

Recently, I was very disconcerted when the *Evening Standard*—no friend of the health service in London, so far as I can see—decided to leap with glee on the answer to a parliamentary question from the hon. Member for Dulwich, which appeared to show that London was not being over-funded. The reply is to be found at column 72 of *Hansard* of 12 April. But the paper did not look at the answer in sufficient detail. It should have looked at note 2, which clearly states that that excluded spending on London's postgraduate special health authorities, which consume an enormous amount of money. I was concerned about the information, and my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) and I tabled further questions to the Secretary of State for Health. We wanted to be clear about the real funding, and it was shown that another £50 a head should be added to the London figures.

Perhaps even more significant was the fact that earlier tables did not show the split between inner and outer London. That is crucial and those figures, which are contained in *Hansard* of 21 April, clearly show that inner London funding is 56 per cent. higher than the national average. Who could argue that that can be justified? I cannot say exactly what the figure should be, but 56 per cent. seems excessive, particularly when the figure for outer London is only 8 per cent. above the national average. That is important in terms of resources and, as mine is an outer-London constituency, I am especially interested in those percentages.

In making a judgment about resources, we also need to look at the needs of London. We know that much money is tied up in the teaching hospitals and that costs are higher in London. Like other hon. Members, I should like to draw attention to the social deprivation in parts of London.

The important Tomlinson report suggested that the number of beds in London could be reduced over a five to 10-year period by between 2,000 and 2,500 and that, at the same time, resources could be shifted to primary care. That process was started by the Secretary of State who rightly made £85 million available this year for investment in primary care in London.

Beds are a crucial part of the equation. I am loth to open the issue of beds because I know that Opposition Members are obsessed with it and that beds are not the best indicator. However, the record needs to be put straight, because there is much misunderstanding. Over the past 10 years, we have succeeded in significantly reducing the number of beds in the national health service while managing to treat many more patients. Therefore, beds are not the crucial factor.

Tomlinson drew heavily on the King's Fund report entitled "London Health Care in the Year 2010" which was published in 1992. Page 47 of the report details the number of beds per 10,000 residents and clearly shows that London is over-bedded compared with England. It also showed that, compared with similar cities, London was not as over-bedded as people believed. That seemed to be a great revelation to the *Evening Standard* and Opposition Members.

London has 43.6 beds in inner deprived areas per 10,000 of population compared with 41.6 beds in comparable British cities. That shows that there are problems in some of those other cities that will need to be addressed. Crucially, London's 43.6 beds compare with 25.4 nationally and that cannot be ignored.

Mr. Tracey: My hon. Friend has mentioned the commentary on London's hospitals by the *Evening Standard*. We all respect that newspaper, but does my hon. Friend agree that it should have done its homework a little better? I have a slight worry, which no doubt is shared by

other hon. Members, that perhaps some of the *Evening Standard* comments on this critical matter have been rather misleading to Londoners.

Mr. Congdon: One of the problems is that many people have tried to rubbish the Tomlinson report by saying that they have found new information. There is no new information: it is all in the excellent report by the King's Fund. That was why I was somewhat surprised by the document which I received yesterday called, "London, the Key Facts" which is not as well produced. It is a much briefer document, but even that document says that inner London has 50 per cent. more beds per capita of resident population than England as a whole. Therefore, there should not be a problem over the issue of beds, but some people do not seem to understand the situation. The King's Fund suggested that London could see a reduction of about 5,000 beds. The Government have not proposed that. They have proposed the lower end of the range and that is right and proper.

Hon. Members might ask how those figures are derived. They are derived from all sorts of things such as patient flows and improvements in day surgery. We know that more people can be treated on a day basis, so that fewer people need to be treated for longer in hospital. In addition, the length of stay in London teaching hospitals is 15 per cent. higher than in provincial teaching hospitals. Even more crucial and revealing is that if inner London hospitals could achieve the level of performance of hospitals elsewhere in the country, London could make do with 2,740 fewer beds. That is not my figure; it is the figure from the King's Fund report.

Therefore, I conclude that London can make do with fewer beds. But it is important to ensure that that is only done in line with improvements in primary care and by monitoring carefully the pressures on health services in London.

Another crucial aspect of health services in London is the funding formula. It is difficult to devise a sensible formula for funding. There have been various formulae over the years. My area does not seem to benefit from any funding formula, so I would welcome something different.

It is difficult to achieve some of the changes in London while resources are being moved away from London, particularly in the various Thames regions. That needs to be looked at carefully. It is not clear exactly what is happening in each district health authority in London in terms of funding. The situation is confused by fundholders using money to purchase services. But we should be cautious about moving funding away from London at the same time as we are trying to implement the much-needed reforms.

The funding formula has to be considered in order properly to take into account social deprivation. I welcome the fact that "The Health of the Nation" sets targets. I believe that they will clearly show the differences in quality of health in different parts of the country, and that information should be used to drive the funding of individual health authorities.

There is no doubt, when one talks to health authority representatives, as the Select Committee on Health has done, that health authorities outside London do not face the same problems as London health authorities, particularly those in inner London, and particularly, as has been mentioned, in terms of the mentally ill. There is no doubt that more needs to be spent and has to be spent in inner city areas than in some rural areas on the mentally ill and their needs. I hope that when my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health replies he will consider formula funding in terms of London.

The health reforms have achieved a great deal. The internal market is leading to services being provided more closely according to need, which, in turn, is leading to benefits in outer London as well as in areas further away from London.

I am also convinced that the other reforms concerning fund holders are leading to massive and valuable change in the health service. I urge hon. Members to read the minutes of the Select Committee's meeting last night with fundholders when they are published. They show where the dynamic in the system is leading to real improvements in primary care, improvements in the services provided in doctors' surgeries and improvements in services provided across district health authorities, not leading to the sort of two-tier service that Opposition Members allege exists, but improving the service to all patients.

I congratulate the Government on those reforms and I also support the desire to ensure that we implement the proposals in the Tomlinson report sensibly. My only concern is that we ensure that we implement them at a pace commensurate with the improvement in primary care, to ensure that the services can take the strain of that change, because any change is difficult.

It is not an option in my view, as Opposition Members, especially the Liberal Democrats, say, to hold fire and not to do anything at the moment. The issue has been fudged for far too long. That is why residents of inner London do not get as good a deal in health services as they deserve. We need to get on with it and I congratulate the Government on their courage in doing so.

9.15 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): There is one thing that the hon. Member for Croydon, North-East (Mr. Congdon) said on which there is agreement across the House: there is some need for change in the health service in London. What we disagree about is what that change should be and the fundamental levels on which it should be founded. I shall return to that major division at the end of my speech.

I wish to devote most of what I have to say in about five minutes to the ambulance service. The performance of that service is clearly visible. The patients charter says that, within eight minutes, 50 per cent. of calls should be answered and within 14 minutes, the figure should be 95 per cent. Everybody in London knows that that is not true of London.

I presented a petition to the House on that subject as long ago as 7 December 1990. Even before the dispute about that answering time, the figures began to drop. For many years before 1988, 90 per cent. of calls were answered in 14 minutes, and ever since then the figure has dived to 63 per cent. and has not changed in the past two years. That has occurred because the funds were not demand-led by patients in the street or by emergencies at home.

A written answer from the Under-Secretary of State for Health said that the managers

"must provide services within the resources allocated".—[*Official Report*, 3 March 1993; Vol. 220, c. *172*.]

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

In other words, it was top-sliced on an abstract figure. Of course, those providers are not as accountable as they used to be under local government.

The Secretary of State, who I am sorry to say is not here, made a very long, three-times-round-the-course, speech. I pressed the Chair during her speech, for which I offer a partial apology, but, if I may so, the right hon. Lady was not even competent enough to tell hon. Members whether she was giving way. If she were able to tell hon. Members, I would sit down. I had to intervene, because there was no sign from her.

Several months before the breakdown of the London ambulance service, I warned the Secretary of State to consider it. I warned her in an official letter delivered in an unconventional way. I did that because I did not have any faith that the private office would let her see it. The right hon. Lady made partial reference to that letter in her speech.

The improvements did not come, so, as she said, £14 million is now allocated to the London ambulance service with the objective, according to a reply on 11 January, of putting 15 per cent. more vehicles on the road. Is 15 per cent. enough? The Government may not achieve their calculated increase, but even if they did, is it enough? The difference between 63 per cent.—

Lady Olga Maitland *rose—*

Mr. Spearing: I am sorry, but I cannot give way. The hon. Lady knows very well that she is not very happy in Parliament. I shall not give way to her, for reasons that she knows very well, quite apart from the lack of time.

There is a limit of 95 per cent. and 63 per cent—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why not give way?"] I am not going to waste time explaining. At the moment, 63 per cent. of calls are answered in 14 minutes, and that rate needs to increase by 50 per cent. How can 15 per cent. more vehicles on the road provide an increase of 50 per cent? Other factors might help, but it will not bridge that gap. I regret to say that that £14 million is probably not enough. The basis of our problems in the health service is that the Government have chosen the wrong method of rationalisation, or providing what they call "value for money".

We have competition among the hospitals of east London. Newham general hospital is now a trust and could go bankrupt. It is in competition with other hospitals in London. It has to keep afloat by competition. Is that how one keeps a hospital afloat? GPs in east London are now accountable to, or are run by, a new-fangled organisation called the City and East London family and community health services, or CELFACHS—not a happy acronym. It is now a trust. Is it right that it is not accountable to local people, as the old family practitioner committees were? At least they were under some local authority elected and accountable management.

Are competition, profit-making, surpluses and statistics, about which we heard much from the hon. Member for Croydon, North-East (Mr. Congdon), the right way to run a health service? No, because it is competition.

I close on the note on which I started and I tell the hon. Gentleman and all Conservative Members why: fundamentally, it is not, as I have challenged hon. Members who represent London constituencies to argue, based on the Christian principles on which both the health service and a good deal of public life was originally based. Why? Because it makes a commodity of the difference between a body needing medical attention and advice and one that does not. Can we reduce that difference to a commodity? No, we cannot and should not, because if we do, we deny the humanity of us all.

Mr. Tracey: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I trust that, as a courtesy to the House, the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) might like to explain the whereabouts of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett), the Opposition spokesman on health. I think that the Labour party has rather demeaned—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. That is not a matter for the Chair, as the hon. Gentleman well knows.

9.21 pm

Ms Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): The debate has ranged over a large area and involved the rewriting of history, and the reinterpretation of many reports to support the Government's policy as it currently exists. I should remind the House that, originally, the reforms were introduced by the then Prime Minister, now Baroness Thatcher, to reduce health expenditure. When they were introduced, the then Secretary of State for Health said:

"Next year . . . we propose to reform the NHS: the coming winter will end the last year of an entirely unreformed service. The winter of next year will not be dominated by cancelled operations, closed wards and cuts in services".—[*Official Report*, 11 January 1990; Vol. 164, c. 1124.]

He should have added, because it would dominate every day, every week, every month in every year of the reforms.

In that period, we have seen massive bed closures, problems in our health service, not only in London but in Birmingham, Manchester, Bristol and across this country. The Government claimed that the health service in London needed to be reformed because it was overfunded. Indeed, we have heard that repeated today. London got more, it was said, than its fair share of resources. Change was inevitable not because the health service needed to change; it was inevitable because it was to be cash-driven by a reformed service and a desire to transfer resources out of London.

The figure trotted out regularly was that London had 20 per cent. of the resources and only 15 per cent. of the population and therefore cuts must follow. I recommend to hon. Members that the best way to measure the expenditure in London is to go to the regional health authorities and ask them for the allocations in budget for each of the district health authorities that make up the four regions that converge in London for 1994-95. What they will find is that London's allocation of the national cake is 15.4 per cent. of the total budget. According to the figures, London is funded 15 per cent., not 20 per cent.

In contributing to the debate, my hon. Friends the Members for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker), for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), for Lewisham, West (Mr. Dowd), for Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice) and for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) have catalogued the feelings of their constituents, their experiences of health care in London and their disbelief at the Government's presentation of their reality.

They cannot understand why London is supposedly over-bedded, yet they cannot get hospital beds. If London is over-bedded, they cannot understand why their hospitals

are going bankrupt. They cannot understand why, when the Government claim to be investing in primary care, their services continue to decline, not improve. They cannot understand why, despite what the Government say, their ambulance service is not reaching the national targets for arriving when called out on a 999 call.

There has been much discussion about the King's Fund. When we look at the reports, whether they be the Tomlinson report, the first King's Fund report, the second King's Fund report, or the second of the two reports produced in the past week, we must look at the context in which they were drafted.

Tomlinson was told to take as given a reduction in expenditure—that is, because London is overfunded—to take as given that London is over-bedded and to take as given an internal market that will further reduce expenditure in London and then to produce a plan for London's services. The Tomlinson report specifically excluded a health needs assessment on the population of London—Tomlinson was specifically required to exclude that.

The new evidence today from the King's Fund suggests that London is underfunded to the tune of £200 million in 1993-94. If the Government hold the King's Fund in such high regard, as they claimed today, what they should do is not pick and choose among the King's Fund reports they agree with, but look in detail at the evidence that is being produced.

Newly emerging evidence suggests that the presently weighted capitation targets underestimate the needs of London. London is Europe's largest city. Seven million people live in Greater London, and a further 4.3 million people across the south-east of England depend on its services. Inner London has lost acute beds faster than elsewhere, and its residents in many parts are being told that they simply will not have proper cover.

Take the 1 million residents in north-east London who will not receive cover from the national health service for anything except the following four categories: emergency admissions; urgent hospital admissions; people waiting more than 18 months; and obstetrics cases. Those will be the only national health services offered to 1 million Londoners in the north-east of the city. It is simply not good enough.

Lady Olga Maitland *rose—*

Ms Primarolo: With respect, it has been a long debate, and both the Minister and I want to make our case. I will not give way at this stage to the hon. Lady.

The needs of London are becoming greater. The incidence of premature mortality is much higher in inner London than in the rest of the country, as is that of neonatal mortality. Inner London has four times the national proportion of people from ethnic minority groups, who have special health needs that we should respect and provide for. Inner London has higher unemployment rates, and London as a whole has a much higher incidence of overcrowding and households that lack basic amenities.

There have been massive hospital closures in London. One in five accident and emergency units have closed, with no replacements. Now the Government are turning on the hospitals. For example, the Queen Elizabeth hospital for children in Hackney is to be closed. It is in the most deprived area in the country, covering Hackney, Newham and Tower Hamlets.

Its 107 beds are to be halved and will be split between two nearby hospitals, destroying one of only two hospitals for children in London, all because of a supposed shortfall of £20 million which is needed to upgrade the building. Incidentally, it is worth noting that charitable income for the other branch of the Queen Elizabeth hospital—Great Ormond Street—is more than £20 million and could cover the shortfall.

Overseas private work generated at Great Ormond Street could do a great deal to support the other hospital, but no, the Government intend to do worse. By the end of this century—within six years—they intend to halve the number of paediatric beds in the city.

Much has been said about general practitioners' premises in inner London. In 1982, 15 per cent. of GP premises were below national standards, but by 1992 the Tomlinson report found that the situation had deteriorated further, and that 46 per cent. of GPs' surgeries were substandard. That is during this Government's stewardship.

What about investment in primary care? What is the result of all the money that the Government have been putting in? There are 2 per cent. fewer GPs, 5 per cent. fewer health visitors, 11 per cent. fewer district nurses, but there are 32 per cent. more managers. That shows the Government's priority and the system that they want to operate.

Let no one say—not even the Minister—that we do not have a two-tier health service. I shall give him an example—a phone call today—*[Interruption.]* This is not funny. A one-stop breast cancer clinic at Charing Cross hospital was telephoned today about a referral. The hospital wanted to know whether the patient was from a fundholding GP and therefore whether she would be given priority. The answer was, "I believe so." I suppose that the Minister would deny that that happened, and that that person could not get any treatment in the clinic at this time.

On 25 April, in an exercise called "Casualty Watch", 58 Londoners were found facing long delays in the casualty departments of 13 leading hospitals. There were not enough beds to put the people from casualty in.

Let us know the truth about London's vanishing beds. In 1982, London's health districts had 26,297 acute hospital beds, but by 1990 the number had dropped by almost 7,000. Now London has 17,181 acute beds.

The numbers on waiting lists are soaring. Londoners are waiting longer and in greater numbers. There is less care for the elderly because some hospitals have gone and others are threatened with closure.

Londoners are being told that their hospitals have too much money, when the reverse is true. London's ambulance service is not responding to Londoners' needs.

But not only inner London hospitals are suffering. In Kingston, which was mentioned earlier, 22 beds have been closed by what we have been told is a flagship trust, because it has not enough money. As I have said, in nine months waiting lists in Redbridge have risen by more than 100 per cent; yet the Government constantly tell us that everything is all right.

A patient from Acton who was referred to the Eastman dental hospital was refused an appointment on the following basis:

"I regret that we are unable to offer a consultation appointment as requested.

We are now receiving more of this type of referral than we have resources to see and under our current funding arrangements the

[Ms Primarolo]

only effect of accepting them all would be to run up ever increasing waiting lists. This would be frustrating for everyone concerned"—

particularly the Government—

"and goes against the thrust of the Patient's Charter, established by the Government."

To ensure compliance with the patients charter, people are being denied appointments in the first place.

Throughout the time in which the number of beds has been falling, the money available has been falling as well. What has been happening in the private sector in London? If beds are not needed, there should be no increase in the private sector, either; but between 1979 and 1983, there was a 41 per cent. increase in the number of private beds.

The Government tell us that beds are not needed. Why are people prepared to pay for them privately, when they are denied them in the national health service? Because they need them, that is why. During the same period, the astronomical salaries of bureaucrats rose by 110 per cent. —money for patient care that could have been spent elsewhere.

What do Londoners say about all this? What has the King's Fund established? It seems to be trendy to ask Londoners what they think after the health service has been destroyed rather than before, because the Government do not consult; but what do patients say? They say this:

"The National Health Service should continue to provide comprehensive healthcare for all Londoners as a right with access irrespective of the individual's financial resources or economic status."

We want to see more money, not less, going into quality care in London.

"Whilst recognising a limited . . . role for private health care, NHS resources of equipment, trained personnel and in-patient facilities should be for the exclusive use of the public health sector"—

national health service patients, not the private sector.

There should be well-resourced hospitals:

"Primary care . . . should be resourced to offer an expanded range of services".

Discrimination should be eradicated. Complementary therapies should be brought into the national health service. Health promotion and education need to be on a wider basis, recognising that poverty, poor housing and inadequate access to community-based services are crucially linked to people's health.

The Government have completely ignored those criteria when aiming for the targets identified in "The Health of the Nation". They have consistently said that we oppose change, but that is not true; what we oppose is change for the sake of change, or change that is driven by market forces, commercialisation and privatisation. We believe that change should be based on the health needs of Londoners, not on a market philosophy.

The Government have got it wrong. They are presiding over chaos in London, and Londoners know it, even if the Government do not. What we want, and what Londoners want, is a regional health authority for London, planning for London; a moratorium on closures; a planning structure that meets those needs; and management of change not through the vagaries of the market but planned to meet the needs of the population of London. I urge my hon. Friends to vote for the motion.

9.39 pm

The Minister for Health (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): The hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) finished her speech by saying that the Labour party was not against change. I must say at the end of what has been a long, and occasionally acrimonious, debate that there is not a shred of evidence to substantiate that claim.

The hon. Lady and her hon. Friends said all afternoon that they were against this change, that change and the other change. Not once—not from the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), to whom I shall return later, the hon. Lady or any of her hon. Friends—did we hear from Labour Members what changes they were in favour of.

We know that the hon. Lady wants a moratorium; in other words, she wants to add to the uncertainty and confusion of London's health care. We know that she wants a regional tier and planned health care. That came within 30 seconds of her being rude about the increased number of planners, managers, administrators, bureaucrats and all the other hard-working members of the national health service around whom she laid her tongue this evening.

The truth is that the Labour party is against change. However, nearly everyone who has looked at London's health service agrees with Sir Bernard Tomlinson's general conclusion that some rationalisation and reorganisation should occur. That was the Labour party's position as enunciated by its spokesman in the other place. My hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) drew attention to that in what I thought was an excellent speech.

"London's heath services may have had a glorious past but their quality in the future depends on our willingness to face up to difficult choices now."

That was said by Professor Bosanquet, professor of health policy at St. Mary's medical school and Imperial college.

"The balance of health and social care in the capital is not appropriate to the needs of Londoners. However, adjusting the balance will inevitably take time. The Secretary of State has shown great courage in making people face up to the need for change. Now the task is to work through these changes on the ground, building up good alternatives that are affordable, that work, and that make a better framework for the long term."

That was said by the chief executive of the King's Fund.

When the Labour party says that it is not in favour of change, it finds itself isolated not just from the Government —its normal expectation—but from its own Front Bench in the other place and from experts whose disinterested observation and input in the health scene in London is beyond the contradiction of anyone—except someone like the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras.

Mr. Dobson: Will the Minister give way?

Dr. Mawhinney: I will, but later. The hon. Gentleman may wish to intervene later.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) took part in the debate. His colleague who normally speaks on health matters—the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne) keeps telling us airily-fairily that his party would spend more money on health. I was grateful that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey identified 5p in the pound as a reasonable increase in taxation, which he thinks should be devoted to improving health care.

Mr. Simon Hughes *indicated dissent.*

Dr. Mawhinney: If the hon. Gentleman shakes his head in amazement, I invite him to look at the *Hansard* record of his speech. That is 5p in the pound for health, and at least 1p in the pound for education. It was worth having the debate so that people in the south, the south-west, London and the rest of the country who might be tempted to listen to the siren multiple voices of the Liberal Democrats next week will understand that, when the party puts forward a health policy, it carries a tag of 5p in the pound extra in taxation.

The real problem about the hon. Gentleman's speech was that he ducked the point which, I hope that he agrees, I put carefully, gently and thoughtfully. I asked the hon. Gentleman what should happen in the face of the evidence that £18 million and rising is going into the Guy's and St. Thomas's trust and the clinical incoherence testified by the clinicians on both sites, and he ducked the question.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I can deal with both points. First, the record will show that the 5p in the pound related not to party policy but to opinion poll evidence of what a significant proportion of the electorate is willing to spend. Some 83 per cent. of the electorate believe that more money should be spent on the health service. Secondly, on Guy's and investment, the Minister knows perfectly well that £18 million compares with the £150 million being spent on Sir Philip Harris house. He knows that the view in both hospitals is that the services provided will not fit on one site and that a rational disposition of services across two sites is possible if only the Minister would listen to advice.

Dr. Mawhinney: That is not what the clinicians said to me. I speak with some authority because I was the person to whom they spoke. When I spoke to the clinicians and the trust, they told me that it was possible to put all the acute services on the St. Thomas's site. I have seen with my own eyes how that can be done. On the hon. Gentleman's first point, he rolled his tongue so lovingly around that 5p in the pound extra taxation that no one who heard him doubted the message that he was trying to convey to the public.

I agreed with my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-East (Mr. Congdon) when he asked, in another excellent speech, why Labour Members never mentioned the good things that happen in the health service. It was no coincidence that he spoke on the back of what we have now come to accept as the traditional whine by the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson). She quoted from four constituents' letters. That leaves 40,570 in-patients and day-case patients and 194,883 out-patients at the Royal Free, none of whom she discussed because she, I, the Royal Free, the House, London and the country know that the hon. Lady likes to try to make the abnormal and the singular appear normal.

As the hon. Lady represents one of the most successful trusts in London, I should have been more impressed if she had felt able to give it some credit for the 7.6 per cent. increase in in-patient and day cases and 9.3 per cent. increase in out-patient cases which that hospital managed to achieve last year.

Ms Glenda Jackson: Will the Minister give way?

Dr. Mawhinney: No I shall not.

Ms Jackson *rose—*

Dr. Mawhinney: I am quite clear that I shall not give way.

My hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) made a telling point when she said that people were moving from inner to outer London. People in outer London, too, want local services. In a somewhat deriding way, the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey said that people in London would not want to travel to Brighton for cardiac services. Typically, he failed to mention that people in Brighton do not want to travel to London when they can have local services. That is the point at issue.

My hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne was right when she said that the issue was not the number of beds, which should not be used as a measure of the quality of care. I shall not bore the House with statistics, but I shall give one. During the 1980s, the average length of stay in a hospital bed dropped from about 10 days to about six days. When we add to that the increase in day surgery and the other factors that my hon. Friends made clear in their speeches, the truth is that beds have become an increasingly meaningless way of judging the performance of the health service.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras did not even know that the number of beds is dropping in all the countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development—we are not running all those countries. The number is dropping all over the developed world because the medical profession is finding new, better and more convenient ways of treating patients. Yes, there has been a decrease in the number of beds. There has been an increase during the same period—the past 10 years—of 53 per cent. in the number of patients treated in London. There has been an increase of 208 per cent. in the past 10 years of the number of patients in London who have had day-case surgery. The hon. Member for Bristol, South was wrong on a number of counts. She was incorrect when she said that waiting times were increasing. They have dropped by 36 per cent. since December 1991, when we introduced the criterion of the 12-month wait.

I reaffirm the pledge that Ministers have given on many occasions that accident and emergency units do not and will not close until adequate and appropriate alternative arrangements are put in place. As one of my hon. Friends made clear, it is true that about 50 per cent. of the usage of accident and emergency services in London is inappropriate. By "inappropriate" I mean that in any other part of the country those patients would have gone to a general practitioner. That problem must be resolved.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State recently asked the chief executive of the national health service to reinforce to the whole of the service that it was unacceptable for people to have long waits on trolleys—a common point across the Floor of the House. Opposition Members take a few cases and try to make it appear that they represent the health service, which is not what Conservative Members do.

In the past year, there were 840,000 accident and emergency cases in the 17 accident and emergency units in London. While I do not accept that any patient should get anything other than the best treatment, I deplore the Opposition's attempts to take a small handful of cases and use them to denigrate the service that is made available to 840,000 patients a year.

Professor Norman Browse, the president of the Royal College of Surgeons said:

[Dr. Mawhinney]

"I know what I would choose for me or my family faced with the choice between a short trip to a hospital with incomplete support facilities or five minutes longer in an ambulance to a fully equipped casualty department, backed up by the right specialist teams. At present, we are diluting our limited expertise. The proposed changes should put that right."

The Lewisham community health council said:

"We accept the closure of the accident and emergency department on the Guy's site provided that acceptable and appropriate alternative services are developed and working satisfactorily on the Lewisham and King's site."

Ms Primarolo: Where are the replacement facilities for the accident and emergency units that have already closed?

Dr. Mawhinney: I have already given the hon. Lady and the House an assurance on that.

It has been interesting that tonight's debate has been virtually all about hospitals. We have heard virtually nothing about general practitioners and primary care.

I will give the House a few examples of what the Government are doing around London to address what is generally recognised to be the need to improve primary care. At the Chingford health centre, work will finish in August this year on improvements to the general practitioner consulting rooms, the reception area and the practice manager's accommodation. In addition, the centre will be made accessible for disabled patients.

As part of the Peterhouse project in Walthamstow, work will start in early 1995 on the development of a GP practice in conjunction with a church community building. Accommodation will be provided for visiting specialists and community staff. A substantial site has been purchased for the Forest road project in Walthamstow, with a view to developing premises for four GPs.

Under the Carisbrooke road project, the intention is to purchase a site this year to enable the development of a purpose-built medical complex, which will accommodate five GPs. In Leyton and Leytonstone, work will start in 1995 to build a primary care unit on the remaining wing of the Langthorn health centre in order to accommodate GPs and other primary services.

I shall deal now with the hospital-at-home scheme. It has the advantage of not only enabling patients who would otherwise go into hospital to remain at home but enabling patients who are in hospital to return home early. In Wandsworth, an intensive patient support at home scheme which deals with orthopaedic cases is due to become operational later this year. It will handle 300 patients in a full year, reducing their average length of stay in hospital from 22 days to 11 days.

In Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster, an orthopaedic and paediatric hospital at home service expects to prevent 78 hospital admissions and enable 177 early discharges from hospital. The Parkside hospital-at-home scheme expects to prevent 48 hospital admissions and enable 144 early discharges. In the Brent and Harrow area, the hospital-at-home scheme enables the early discharge of patients who have had hip replacement operations.

In Camden and Islington, the home choice scheme operated by the community trust has a capacity to provide health and social services care for up to 24 patients. The scheme providing post-hospital and intensive care for children at home expects to treat 100 patients this year. The Ealing hospital-at-home scheme is expected to prevent 20 hospital admissions and enable 180 early discharges. The Hounslow hospital-at-home scheme will enable 250 early discharges. I could go on and on, as we reconfigure primary health services.

We have had a look at the caring face of the Labour party when it comes to health. The care of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) stretches just as far as the television camera flex. We have had the opportunity to listen to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras. Judy Bennett will be disappointed tonight. In his election address, she wrote:

"Frank Dobson really knows what he's on about when it comes to the NHS".

He could have fooled us.

We know what the hon. Gentleman thinks about Londoners. He thinks "we have failed those people, we have a lot to answer for. If we are honest we have a lot more to answer for in London than they have in some other parts of the country." We know what he thinks about business men. He thinks that they are stinking, lousy, thieving, incompetent scum. But we have no idea what he thinks about the health service. He got his facts wrong, he did not mention patients and there was no recognition of GPs.

Then there was the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett). They seek him here, they seek him there—he must be there because he is not here. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) told him that he could not speak and the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East told him not even to bother to come.

There we have them: the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East, the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras and the hon. Member for Brightside—the Foggy, Compo and Clegg of the Labour health team. We have heard today the last of the summer whine. I am not so unchivalrous as to identify the hon. Member for Bristol, South with Nora Batty. They are interested in beds; we are interested in patients. More patients are being treated in fewer beds—that is what separates us. Londoners want patients to be treated and that is what they are getting, to a quality unmatched as never before. That is what we offer them next week.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 201, Noes 279.

Division No. 227] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene	Burden, Richard
Ainger, Nick	Byers, Stephen
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*	Cabom, Richard
Allen, Graham	Callaghan, Jim
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*	Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Armstrong, Hilary	Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Ashton, Joe	Canavan, Dennis
Austin-Walker, John	Cann, Jamie
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Barnes, Harry	Chisholm, Malcolm
Battle, John	Clapham, Michael
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret	Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Bell, Stuart	Coffey, Ann
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Cohen, Harry
Bennett, Andrew F.	Connarty, Michael
Benton, Joe	Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Bermingham, Gerald	Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Berry, Roger	Corbett, Robin
Boyes, Roland	Corbyn, Jeremy
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Corston, Ms Jean
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*	Cousins, Jim
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*	Cox, Tom

Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge Hl)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hanson, David
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jamieson, David
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Bdgn)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Vaz, Keith
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Spellar and
Mr. John Cummings.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushf)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'sth)*
Knox, Sir David

Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broadtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riffkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments) and agreed to.*

MADAM SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House noting the rapid advance of medical science, population migration from Inner London and the increase in provision of specialist services outside the Capital, believes that the National Health Service must respond to these changes; congratulates the first government in 100 years prepared to tackle these issues; believes that the Government's long-term programme of strategic change is already leading to better services for patients, especially better primary care, and will strengthen centres of excellence in teaching and research and lead to a more sensible use of resources; and condemns her Majesty's Opposition for cynically treating the National Health Service in London as a party political battleground regardless of the interests of either staff or patients.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

RAW TOBACCO

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4311/94, relating to European Court of Auditors Special Report No. 8/93 on the common organisation of the market in raw tobacco; and strongly supports the Government's policy to continue to press for further reform of the tobacco regime and for appropriate measures to be taken to prevent fraud.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITIONS

Animal Welfare

10.13 pm

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I beg leave to present two petitions.

The first one is on behalf of the British Rabbit Council. The council is petitioning the House of Commons in respect of the problem of viral haemorrhagic disease, which threatens rabbit showers and breeders. The problem is that in this country no vaccine to combat the disease is available. A suitable vaccine can be obtained on the continent, but, because of our regulations, it is not available in the United Kingdom. The petition has been signed by 14,594 people in support of the 5,000 members of the British Rabbit Council and the 1 million people who keep rabbits as pets and companion animals. The petition states:

"The petition of members of the British Rabbit Council declares that there is an urgent need to have a vaccine available in Britain to combat the threat of viral haemorrhagic Disease in Rabbits. The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons take all possible action to ensure that the Veterinary Medicines Directorate does all that it can to ensure the vaccine available in other European countries is made available in this country.

And the Petitioners remain, etc."

The second petition has been organised by Joanne Bevens of 37 Coniston close, Beechwood West, Runcorn, Cheshire. It is about the problem of the welfare during transport of horses that are destined for slaughter.

The House will join me in asking the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to ensure that the Minimum Value Order, which protects British horses being transported for slaughter abroad, is retained. Many horses and other animals are transported abroad, often in poor conditions. The petition was organised and given to the National Association of Horse Watch Groups of which I am proud to be patron.

The petition states:

"To the House of Commons. The petition of people concerned about the welfare of horses declares that there is great concern about the conditions and welfare of horses that are headed abroad for slaughter. The Petitioners therefore request that the House of

Commons ensure that the Minimum Value Order is retained, that there is a maximum journey time for horses and all other livestock, and that high standards of inspection and enforcement of rules protecting animals in transit is applied.
And the Petitioners remain, etc."

To lie upon the Table.

Subsidence (Mortgages and Insurance)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

10.16 pm

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise a subject that is of great importance not only to my constituents but to many people who live in coal mining areas and former coal mining areas. It is about the recent refusals by insurance companies to grant insurance cover to properties that have been damaged by coal mining subsidence. That has led to refusals of mortgages for people wishing to purchase properties. It has led to a number of properties in coal mining areas being rendered unsaleable and in other cases to the value of properties being much reduced.

In the past, the problem has not been particularly great, unless the property was severely damaged or likely to suffer further damage in future, in which case an insurance company would be justified in not granting insurance cover and a building society would be justified in not granting a mortgage on a potential risk. It appears that there has been a change of policy by the insurance companies, and one can only assume that that is because of the impending privatisation of the coal industry and fears by insurance companies—perhaps misguided—that the provisions of the Coal Industry Bill are inadequate to cover this area.

I came to know about the subject only recently, or I would have sought to raise it during the debates on the Coal Industry Bill. I found out about it through a chance meeting with the director of a local estate agent. It had been aware of the problem for some time, as had British Coal's estates departments around the country. But for some reason British Coal had not seen fit to raise the matter publicly. One can only assume that that was done so as not to jeopardise the deliberations on the Coal Industry Bill as it passed through the House.

What is the effect of the decision by the insurance companies? Basically, the majority of properties in coal mining areas have at some time been damaged by subsidence. In the past, that has been quite common in coal mining areas and British Coal has always attended efficiently to compensation. It has sought to repair properties or at least compensate the owners for the damage that has been caused.

In the past, apart from one or two problems on which I shall not dwell, the subsidence damage system has worked well. The Coal Mining Subsidence Act passed through the House in 1991. But if insurance companies refuse to insure properties that are basically sound, but which have historic subsidence damage, thousands of properties will be blighted.

That applies not only to properties in my constituency but to properties in coal mining areas throughout the country, and that is despite the fact that those properties are in sound condition at present, any damage having previously been repaired. Many properties are being left unsaleable and, in extreme cases, many will be worth nothing apart from the value of the land on which they stand.

The only redress available to owners of such blighted properties is to take action against British Coal for further compensation in view of the depreciation of their properties. Given the potential number of properties involved and the potential value of claims, which range

[Mr. Eric Illsley]

from a few thousand pounds to tens of thousands of pounds for individual properties, British Coal would face a substantial claim. That means that, at a time when British Coal is being privatised with a few billion pounds worth of contingent liabilities, it will face further liabilities and the threat of further claims for compensation from blighted property owners.

The Government should also remember that the matter will affect not only relatively recent coal mining areas, such as Barnsley, Wales or Scotland, but areas where, although coal mining has long since ceased, there are historic liabilities—places such as Somerset and Bristol, or Kent, which is a more recent example. In those areas, there will still be historic aspects of coal mining subsidence damage.

The threat of such compensation claims should have led British Coal, which I believe has known about the matter for some time, to raise the matter publicly and to take action to make insurance companies realise that what they are doing is nonsensical.

One can only assume that insurance companies, valuers and surveyors are more than ever sensitive to subsidence damage. Anyone who seeks to buy a home and employs a valuer or surveyor to value it for mortgage purposes might be asked whether the property has been previously damaged by coal mining subsidence. If the answer is in the affirmative, the valuer will automatically refer it to the insurance company to see whether it will cover the risk. The insurance company then decides whether to insure the property.

Alternatively, the valuer will suggest that a mining report be obtained and if that shows evidence of a previous claim, albeit many years ago, the building society will again refer the property to the insurance company for it to decide whether it is a substantial risk.

A couple in my constituency arranged a mortgage on a property that they wanted to buy a few hundred yards from my home. They went through the usual procedures and obtained a mining report which showed that there had been a previous claim for compensation for coal mining subsidence. The mortgage offer was withdrawn because the building society could not arrange cover through an insurance company on that property. The solicitors acting on behalf of the purchasers tried 33 different insurance companies in Barnsley, but could not obtain insurance cover for that property. The insurance cover was refused because of the previous subsidence claim—a claim for compensation for previous subsidence damage for which repairs were carried out. The refusal of insurance cover was not because the property was in a poor condition or had any particular current defect, but was solely on the ground of the historic claim for compensation. Due to the refusal of a mortgage, the sale fell through, as did succeeding sales throughout the chain. The major point is that that is historical subsidence damage, which has been repaired by British Coal. In the days of the British Coal estates department, damage was repaired to a very high standard. It is historical subsidence damage and we are not talking of current defects in those properties.

The chance of further subsidence damage is remote because there are no collieries left in my area, thanks, of course, to the present Government's policy. Also, subsidence damage will always settle and, after time, there should be no further damage from those original workings. The insurance companies do not seem to have regard to the previous repairs or the present state of the property. As I have said, the properties are quite sound and in some cases they are perfectly sound. Insurance companies are refusing cover even when the valuer or the surveyor reports no immediate, current problems.

The insurance companies also have no regard to the date of the last workings under the property or in its vicinity. They are not looking back at the previous workings. It is clear that many sound properties are being mistakenly and needlessly blighted by the actions of the building societies and the insurance companies.

In the final few minutes, I shall consider why that is happening. I mentioned earlier that insurance companies are refusing to cover future risk because of historic liabilities and incidents. No account is being taken of the current situation and no judgment is being made purely on the current state of the property. However, it also seems that insurance companies are afraid that if there are instances of further damage, which is, of course, unlikely, adequate repairs will not be carried out by the new coal companies or by the new Coal Authority, as envisaged in the Coal Industry Bill, or that the newly privatised coal companies will not readily accept liability for subsidence damage, or that they will try to delay settlement. It seems that insurance companies and building societies feel that the new coal companies may quickly fail financially. In an uncertain market, the insurance companies may not have confidence in the long-term future of the new private coal companies that are springing up. It is obvious that the new coal companies will want to limit their liability and, obviously, will try to avoid liability for historic subsidence damage. They will try to minimise their future liabilities. They may try to avoid payment or avoid liability or even prevaricate in the settlement of compensation claims.

The proposals in the Coal Industry Bill do not engender confidence. Now not only Opposition Members are making the point that the subsidence proposals are not adequate, but the financial institutions are, too. It would be appear that the people in the City—the insurance companies—are not willing to risk their money on the Government's proposals for subsidence damage. It would appear that the subsidence provisions in the Bill have failed at the first hurdle.

I have been in contact, as I am sure the Minister has, with a number of organisations in relation to the matter, especially many estate agents and building societies in my locality. I have also received a letter from the Association of British Insurers and I thank it for its assistance. It said that its main concern is that there should be no diminution of the Coal Mining Subsidence Act 1991. As we know, certain provisions of that Act are to be repealed by the Coal Industry Bill. The Association of British Insurers supported an amendment as part of the coal liaison group to place responsibility for subsidence damage on the Coal Authority. That would have a number of advantages. First, it would leave one body to deal with coal mining subsidence matters; secondly, it would be one address for people to contact; thirdly, it would deal with the whole gamut of subsidence arrangements; and, fourthly, it would enable the Coal Authority to use existing structures such as British Coal's estates departments, which do a good job in relation to coal mining subsidence. I congratulate them on their work in the past. Fifthly, it would give uniformity across the country, as all areas would be dealt with

adequately and uniformly by one authority. Sixthly, it would, perhaps, give a speedier system whereby the Coal Authority could deal quickly with claims; and, seventhly, it would also allow that authority then to claim reimbursement from the new coal companies.

If the amendment were supported, it would probably give a little more confidence to the insurance industry on those matters. The insurers seem quite happy with the provisions of the Subsidence Act 1991. As someone who served on the Standing Committee that considered that legislation, I can see why. I served also on the Select Committee on Energy, where we investigated coal mining subsidence matters, and the Bill succeeded its report.

The Government should take a number of steps to try to restore some confidence to the insurance companies with regard to those properties. I ask the Minister, if he has not already done so, to meet representatives of the insurance companies to discuss the issues and try to persuade them to take a more realistic attitude with regard to those properties and the granting of insurance cover. I ask him also to check with British Coal to judge the extent of the problem and see whether British Coal cannot reassure the insurance companies and show them the competence and standard of repairs that have been carried out, which might alleviate some of their fears. I urge him, even at this late stage, to accept the amendment proposed by the coal liaison group to retain the provisions of the 1991 Act in full, but, above all, to place future responsibility for subsidence damage on the Coal Authority alone.

The issue is very important in my area. If the Minister seriously wants the proposals in the Coal Industry Bill to succeed, I hope that he will give serious consideration to the matters that I have raised this evening.

10.31 pm

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): I congratulate the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) not only on being a Whip for his party but on being so persuasive in his letter to you, Madam Speaker, that you felt able to select the matter for debate at such a civilised time in the evening.

I also congratulate the hon. Gentleman on identifying and raising the issue. I do not think that I am being unfair to him when I say that he could not resist the odd digs at me and introduced the odd hint of a conspiracy theory on the issue; a bit of party politics, even at this time of night, never does anybody any harm. The reality is that he has identified a concern in his constituency which he recognises is fairly specific, but which, if it gained hold, could create quite a considerable problem. It is not a matter that I was aware of previously and the Adjournment debate has, as they are designed to do, acquainted me with the issue. Both he and I have been able in our different ways to get senior people in the building societies and insurance companies to concentrate on the issue and, perhaps, understand the various elements rather better.

I cannot resist a little bit of gentle retaliation. I am delighted that home ownership has caught on so widely in Barnsley and that the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham), who is well-known for his moderation, being a member of the right-wing of his party, are here to represent and support the home owners of Barnsley so effectively. It is one of the great successes of this Government that home ownership has risen so widely, even in Barnsley. I am the first to recognise that, of course, from time to time, difficulties are associated with home ownership. It is in the interests of both sides of the House that we do our best to sort them out.

The hon. Member for Barnsley, Central is right to zero in on the problem of insurance and the response of insurance companies to applications by home owners for insurance. There is no serious division across the House about the effectiveness of the 1991 Act in practice as well as in theory. It is a considerable improvement on the previous system.

In fairness to the insurance companies, one must also set the whole issue of insurance and subsidence in context. Most insuring companies have had considerable underwriting losses on their general insurance accounts in the past few years. Indeed, the total losses in the previous three-year period were no less than £5.6 billion. Interestingly, the cost of claims relating to subsidence, which amounted to £255 million in 1989, had risen to £506 million in 1990 and £540 million in 1991. Not only was that a significant increase; it was completely unanticipated. It was associated with drought conditions across the country—something which we had never known on such a scale in this country before.

The evidence for the unexpected nature of those increases in claims is that the value of subsidence claims had fallen back to £134 million by 1993. I say that simply to put in context the fact that insurance companies have generally become much more concerned about subsidence, for whatever reason the subsidence was caused. One only has to look at the impact on their profitability and their capital base to understand why that happened.

The hon. Gentleman has been in touch with the Association of British Insurers, and I know that he recognises that the particular terms and conditions of cover are matters solely for insurers to determine. Indeed, the Government's powers under the Insurance Companies Act 1982 are primarily concerned with the solvency of insurance companies. Except where such matters are concerned—in other words, the essential financial solvency—the Government have no powers to intervene in the day-to-day business of insurance companies.

None the less, I have been in touch with the ABI, as the hon. Gentleman knows. I was keen to learn about the position of ABI where mining subsidence had previously occurred. The reason why I am concentrating on the position where mining subsidence had previously occurred is because it is the hon. Gentleman's particular concern and because, where that has happened, British Coal and its successor companies under the 1991 Act are under an obligation to remedy mining subsidence. In practice therefore, insurers should not be affected by this particular factor.

I also spoke to British Coal about the matter. For the record and because I know that the hon. Gentleman does not mean it, I must simply reject his conspiracy theory that British Coal is keeping quiet about all this. British Coal told me that, from time to time, it is approached by individuals saying that they are unable to get insurance because their property has previously suffered mining subsidence damage; often, that mining subsidence damage has been repaired.

I understand that when British Coal is approached by an individual, it offers to contact the insurance company to spell out the extent of British Coal's remedial obligations for subsidence damage. In other words, it explains the

[Mr. Tim Eggar]

impact of the 1991 Act to the insurance company. The purpose of that discussion is to bring home to the insurance company the fact that it will not be liable for mining subsidence damage claims.

In addition, British Coal met the Association of British Insurers on a number of occasions, most recently within the past couple of months, to get the same point across. The purpose of those meetings is to put the association in a position to inform its members.

I think that I can infer from what the hon. Gentleman said that part of the problem is that insurance companies —at a relatively junior level—do not understand the implications of the fact that mining subsidence damage is involved and that the damage has been recognised as such. Possibly, the change that he identified has more to do with the general wariness of insurance companies about subsidence in general than with anything else.

I gather that the ABI has responded to the hon. Gentleman. It led me to understand that the insurance industry's attitude to property damage in mining areas is that where satisfactory repairs have been carried out as a result of a subsidence claim being settled, an insurer would not generally refuse a renewal of cover.

As regards house sales in mining areas, insurance cover should be made available to a new owner, subject to normal underwriting conditions, provided that the property was not damaged or, if it had been, it had been repaired satisfactorily.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that lenders and insurers might become more reluctant to insure and lend as a result of fears that a private sector mining company might not meet subsidence obligations because of insolvency. I do not think that he had the pleasure of serving on the Standing Committee of the Coal Industry Bill with his hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone. We spent a considerable time debating the relevant clauses, although it is fair to say that we had not identified that problem at the time.

I will not detain the House by going through all the various measures in the Bill that are designed to ensure that private sector mining companies have the funds to meet all subsidence claims.

Of course, one recognises that, eventually, within the area of responsibility, as it is termed in the Bill, mining will finish and some time after that subsidence liabilities will fall on the Coal Authority—that is, the public sector. The Bill allows for the area of responsibility and the associated responsibility for subsidence to be extinguished so that an operator does not have to retain liability for subsidence indefinitely. I am sure that the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone remembers our debates on that issue.

My officials also spoke to the Council of Mortgage Lenders and the Building Societies Association to ascertain their positions on the matter. They have been unable to find any evidence to show that the members of those organisations have changed their policy.

I am genuinely grateful to the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central for raising the issue. The fact that he has done so has alerted me to it and meant that I have been able to raise it with insurers and mortgage lenders. I am hopeful that, as a result of the attention that he has been able to draw to the problem, the difficulties will not continue and that general awareness within the insurance industry and mining areas will be increased.

If there are specific problems, I will willingly seek to work with the Member to try to redress them. I have already explained British Coal's policy. We shall also ensure that when the time comes for private sector operators to take over mining areas, the debate is drawn to their attention, so that they are aware of British Coal's policy.

I thank the hon. Gentleman for raising the issue, and thank you, Madam Speaker, for selecting it for discussion this evening.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seventeen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 29 April 1994

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill

9.34 am

Sir John Hannam (Exeter): I beg to move,

That, in the opinion of this House, Her Majesty's Ministers should provide sufficient time on the floor of the House before 27th May 1994 to allow all remaining stages of the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill to be completed, and that sufficient time be provided before the end of the Session for the consideration of any Amendments to the Bill which may be made by the House of Lords.

The motion asks hon. Members to approve a resolution calling on the Government to provide the necessary parliamentary time for an important private Member's Bill to proceed. There are many hon. Members who support the Bill, but are unable to be here today. There are also many hon. Members who are present and will participate in today's debate.

There is one right hon. and learned Member who I particularly wish was present today—the Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), who is paying a visit to my constituency today. I was unable to persuade him to give up that trip to come here instead.

Last November, the hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry) came seventh in the ballot. Although that is not a prime position for parliamentary time, it was very much to the delight of the all-party disablement group and all the disability organisations outside that the hon. Gentleman took the opportunity to introduce a Bill that had previously passed through all its stages in the House of Lords, had been sponsored by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and had come to this House, only narrowly to fail to obtain a Second Reading.

The Bill introduces comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation for disabled people, and seeks to outlaw discrimination on the ground of disability in every section of life—education, employment, training, banking, insurance, and access to buildings, houses and leisure and transport facilities.

Today's debate is not a debate on the Government's record in the subject. I am proud of the many advances achieved in recent years. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People knows of my admiration for the work he does for disabled people. The Government share our overall objective of removing discrimination, but we differ on the means and the paths of achieving it, which is why the Bill has been introduced.

Once the hon. Member for Kingswood announced his intention to promote the Bill, disabled people across the country began a vigourous and disciplined campaign in support. On 9 March, more than 2,000 disabled people, and their friends and relatives, lobbied the House and Members of Parliament asking them to vote for the Bill's Second Reading. Two days later, 231 hon. Members did just that, and no one voted against. With that unanimous vote the House expressed its opposition to discrimination against disabled people. The vote signalled to employers, service provides and disabled people that Parliament takes the issue seriously. We are determined to legislate to end discrimination.

My motion seeks to renew the commitment made on 11 March, and asks the Government not to let such a serious and well-supported commitment become a hostage to the restrictions of the parliamentary timetable. There is ample historical precedent for the Government allowing a private Member's Bill to progress. Rarely has there been a Bill more worthy of reordering parliamentary business.

I shall outline what happened to the Bill in Committee. Just before Easter, the Committee discussing the Bill sat for the first time and we moved a timetable motion expressing our willingness to sit mornings and evenings, Tuesdays and Wednesdays to give us sufficient time to look at the provisions of the Bill in detail, as the Prime Minister had requested on the Floor of the House.

It was with considerable disappointment therefore that members of the Committee greeted the Government's decision not to table any amendments in Committee, especially as that seemed to be contrary to the wishes that the Prime Minister had expressed in his statement on 8 March. However, sponsors and supporters of the Bill tabled amendments in Committee, listened to the concerns of opponents of the Bill and accepted the principle behind amendments suggested by others.

After three intense sittings of the Committee, we were all agreed that the Bill had been examined in detail and improved, and that it was now ready to return to the Floor of the House for its Report stage.

More than 20 amendments were discussed in Committee. Some extended the provisions of the Bill to telecommunication provision for people with sensory disabilities. The employment provision was extended to employers of fewer than 20 people. As 97 per cent. of the population are employed in small businesses and other such outfits, it was necessary to ensure that people would be covered against onerous responsibilities by the introduction of such phrases as "reasonable accommodation" and "undue hardship". We amended the Bill to ensure that that was the case.

The Bill was also extended to encompass domestic new buildings. For many years, we have been involved in a campaign for a reasonable standard of accessibility to be incorporated automatically into all new domestic buildings.

Other amendments dealt with the language of disability and the terms used. We changed, for example, the words "people with disabilities" to "disabled people". The disablement commission was changed to the Disability Rights Commission. Some amendments dealt with the workings and responsibilities of the commission. The commission was given duties instead of functions. A detailed procedure was set out in terms of

"consultation with Parliament before the Commission could issue its Codes of Practice."

The principle of consulting employment organisations was accepted, which is an important point.

We all accept that employers are apprehensive about the Bill's cost implications. That is why we had meetings with the Employers Forum on Disability, and why we are setting up meetings with the Institute of Directors and the Confederation of British Industry.

[Sir John Hannam]

On 22 April, the CBI wrote to ask for consultation. A letter that I received from Howard Davies, the director-general of the CBI, contained two important passages. He wrote:

"The first concern is that, while there is clearly a need for a new legislative framework"—

a key phrase—

"to protect people with disabilities in employment, and possibly in other areas, to introduce such legislation without consulting employers and other groups that will be instrumental in ensuring that such legislation is effective is unlikely to produce the best solution. There are many factors that need to be taken into consideration, and which could be tackled in a consultation exercise."

He then lists those factors, which we have discussed. He continues:

"I also hope that you will be able to support the proposal that I am making to the Secretaries of State concerned with this area. I am suggesting that Government should acknowledge the need for action in the areas highlighted by the Bill and bring forward its own White Paper on the civil rights of people with disabilities. I hope that my comments also demonstrate that the CBI would want to make a positive and constructive contribution to that process."

That is a significant letter. It suggests a White Paper and it shows that the biggest employer organisation in the country wants action on civil rights for disabled people.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Did the hon. Gentleman gain the impression that the CBI was seeking a White Paper as a substitute for the Bill, or to supplement and complement it?

Sir John Hannam: The CBI recognises that the Government have difficulties in accepting the Bill. That is a realistic appraisal. It wants to have consultations and is setting up meetings, but it is moving from basic stand-off hostility to the concept of legislation.

That letter clearly shows that the CBI recognises that there is a need for action in employment and other sectors. It is saying that the Government cannot just stand back; that they must move forward; and that, if the Bill is not acceptable to them, they must produce a White Paper that will show their intent. The CBI has taken a significant step.

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): Has the hon. Gentleman had any discussions with the Institute of Directors? Today, I received through the post, as possibly other hon. Members have, the May edition of "Disability Now" in which Lord Young, the president of the Institute of Directors, is highly critical of the Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Dr. Berry).

Sir John Hannam: We are having a dialogue and setting up a meeting with the Institute of Directors, which has expressed hostility to the Bill. It is probably the one organisation that has expressed the greatest hostility, representing the fears, which I mentioned earlier, of the business sector.

The business sector in the United States also had those fears when it went through the same process. We hope to set up discussions with the CBI and the Institute of Directors to start reassuring them and to explain that not only costs but benefits are involved. One has to be realistic and include costs and benefits in any analysis of the effects of the Bill.

In Committee, we extended the powers of the Secretary of State to exempt certain categories of covered entities. We proposed an amendment to allow for much longer phase-in periods for compliance with the requirements of the Bill. That is an important factor and will be of significant reassurance to the Institute of Directors, the CBI, businesses and the Federation of Small Businesses. That amendment is a reaction to, and should reassure the fears expressed over, the possible costs of immediate implementation of statutory legislation on adaptation to buildings and equipment.

The amendments showed that the promoters and supporters of the Bill had acted, in the absence of any amendments from the Government, as a respectable mouthpiece and channel for the concerns expressed outside.

Members of the all-party disablement group and the disability lobby have approached the Prime Minister, Secretaries of State and the organisations that oppose the Bill. We have offered to meet them and to discuss concerns about the legislation's effects. Meetings are now being arranged. Unlike most private Member's Bills, which emerge from Committee basically unamended, this one was improved in Committee. It is ready for and deserving of a full Report stage.

As I mentioned, the Institute of Directors, the CBI and the Federation of Small Businesses have expressed their concerns about the Bill's provisions. The CBI has expressed rational and valid misgivings about its effect on businesses. Those echo the concerns that were expressed in the United States, where people were worried about the effect of the Americans with Disabilities Act on their businesses. Like the American legislation, our Bill safeguards business interests with clauses that include such terms as "reasonable accommodation" and "undue hardship", which are further backed up by the long phasing-in periods for the most inaccessible and expensive facilities.

This week, I received a letter from America from the Council of Better Business Bureaus, which has a membership of about 263,000 businesses. In that organisation, Jennifer Ley deals specifically with the effects of the American legislation. She writes:

"I must admit some shock at the temerity of your UK colleagues in the business community. As you will find in the US General Accounting Office Report, 'ADA, Initial Accessibility' . . . business response (in America) has been very positive to the ADA. In as much as the BBB bureau system has as its members some 263,000 businesses I can tell that the response that we have received from businesses has been very positive."

She goes on:

"I must also point out that the financial burdens your opponents quote are not quite accurate. In the case of new construction the requirements of"

the legislation in the United States

"only increase the original price by 1 per cent. The buying power of 49 million people and the addition to the workforce are also factors they have neglected to mention."

I must stress that the only people who need be afraid of this legislation are those who have not properly read the Bill, and those who wish to continue unfairly to discriminate against disabled people.

There are, of course, many misconceptions about the Bill, and I shall try to clarify some of them. There is a misconception that the Bill would require an employer to hire a disabled person even if he were not best suited to the job, but that is not true. The Bill is not a positive discrimination Bill, but would give disabled people the right to legal redress if they felt that they had been discriminated against unreasonably.

A further misconception is that all buildings would have to be made accessible immediately, whatever the cost involved and whatever the size of the building. Again, that is just not true. As I have already said, that would be prevented by the use of terms such as "reasonable accommodation" and "undue hardship", and long phase-in periods where appropriate.

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): Does my hon. Friend feel that such provisions water down the Bill too much?

Sir John Hannam: No, they follow the pattern of the American experience where, after negotiations with all the representative bodies involved, a solution was reached which allowed a suitable phase-in period. In fact, that period was up to 20 years.

Let us consider transport systems for a moment. It would be ridiculous to expect our underground system to be adapted for disabled people within a week, six months or a year. It will take a very long time and will have to be carefully planned and phased in, all of which, now that the Bill has been amended, would come under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of State.

We have not laid down a fixed period for implementation of the Bill's provisions. In America, a period of 20 years was laid down but, because of the concerns expressed, we have gone further and left it to the Secretary of State to work out the length of time that would be necessary for the changes to be made. I hope that that explains the reassurances given in the Bill. The Bill will not lose its effectiveness, because such legislation can change the climate overnight.

Another fear that has been expressed, and which is connected to the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant), is that the Bill would bankrupt small businesses and create financial hardship among many commercial interests. Again, that is not true. In addition to the legal reassurances in the Bill, practical reassurance is available from the experience of business in the United States. As I said on Second Reading, there have been no business collapses as a result of the 1990 legislation in America.

The Institute of Directors claimed that it would be cheaper to provide disabled people with separate special facilities instead of improving access in general. I do not believe that the institute understands the basic concept of equality which underlies anti-discrimination legislation. It also severely underestimates the role that disabled people can play in the economy once workplaces become accessible to them.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): One of the complaints made by the Institute of Directors in particular was that there had been no prior consultation with business organisations before the Bill was drafted, and that what was inevitably a difficult matter—the attempt to quantify the cost to business of such legislation—became even more important. What consultation is now taking place with businesses, the Institute of Directors, the Federation of Small Businesses or the Confederation of British Industry?

Sir John Hannam: At the Prime Minister's behest, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People consulted on anti-discrimination legislation. At the same time, meetings were taking place between the all-party disablement group and the Employers Forum on Disability to discuss the implications of the Bill. I should not like to go too far, but I think that we have been able to persuade members of the forum that there was a sound case for the presentation of this legislation. In this connection, I have quoted from a letter written by the director-general of the CBI, and we are now setting up meetings with the other two organisations that my hon. Friend mentioned.

Another misconception that has been peddled is that the Bill would require employers to pay equal wages to less productive employees, but that is not true. The Bill would cover only qualified individuals, by whom I mean disabled people who would otherwise fit the criteria for a vacancy, but who might need some accommodation of their disability in order for them to be able to carry out the essential functions of the job.

That notion is also embodied in the access to work provisions now coming from the Department of Employment. I hope that the provision will clear up any misconception that the Bill would require employers to open up positions of employment for all the wrong reasons.

I believe that I reflect the views of most hon. Members when I say that disabled people want to be able to pay their taxes, to go to work and to live reasonably, just like everyone else. It is as simple as that. I hope that I have cleared up some of the unfounded fears expressed by opponents of the Bill.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): Part IV deals with the provision of goods and services, and clause 6 contains a fairly long list of bodies and organisations that must provide facilities for the disabled. It will clearly involve a great deal of money. My hon. Friend mentioned a phase-in period of 20 years in the United States, but I can find no mention of a phase-in period in the Bill. As I understand it, organisations will be required to provide the necessary facilities overnight.

Sir John Hannam: If my hon. Friend reads the amendments that were made in Committee, he will realise that the reverse is the case. It is true that the unamended Bill laid down a five-year period for implementation, but the Committee considered that that was too short. We therefore made the phase-in period open-ended, at the discretion of the Secretary of State. We have allowed a longer period than that in the United States, because we took account of the fears that were being expressed.

However, some things can be done literally overnight, as I shall show later. In the United States, a vast raft of access was provided overnight by many employers who had always been able to do so but had never bothered because there had been no requirement that they should not discriminate against disabled people. The psychological factor can determine a sea change in attitude towards disabled people.

The Bill received an unopposed Second Reading, and was thoroughly examined in detail in Committee. It should now be allowed to pass through the rest of its stages, with both Houses being given the opportunity to express their views on an extremely important subject. We need the Government to show that they are serious, and the best way to do that would be for them to allow Government time for the remaining stages.

Disabled people have waited too long to the Bill for it to be killed by parliamentary procedure. We should not be

[Sir John Hannam]

doing ourselves any favours by hiding our concerns behind excuses of timetables and so on, especially when the Bill's sponsors have shown such willingness to discuss the concerns of others and, where reasonable, to meet them halfway.

I have received many letters from organisations representing disabled people and from disabled people themselves. I shall read from a couple to give some flavour of the feelings of many organisations and people outside. In a letter dated 21 April, the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People wrote:

"It would be very sad if Disabled People failed to gain full and equal rights due to parliamentary procedure, particularly when so many of you"—

Members of Parliament—

"clearly support the Bill."

A letter from the Royal National Institute for Deaf People states:

"Much excitement has been generated throughout the deaf and hard of hearing communities at the degree of support the Bill has received from all sides of the House: And I know every one of the 7.5 million people who have some hearing loss throughout the UK would . . . wish you every success next week."

There are many other letters from which I could quote for half an hour or an hour.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that those organisations would be dismayed if sufficient time were not allowed for the Bill, especially in the light of rumours going around the Palace that the House will probably rise for the summer recess earlier than we have done for many years?

Sir John Hannam: I welcome that intervention. If I was making an objective analysis of the parliamentary programme, I would say that there was not a great deal of business to keep us here late into the summer. The Government therefore cannot use the argument that we have such a crowded timetable that time cannot be found.

The Government must consider granting the extra time, for several reasons. First, support for the Bill is overwhelming. All the national disability organisations —I have mentioned one or two—the House of Lords, the all-party disablement group and the majority of hon. Members, including a growing number of Conservative Back-Bench Members, have expressed their support for comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation.

Secondly, the Prime Minister expressed a desire for the Bill to be examined in detail, and individual Secretaries of State have said that they are looking with interest at the Committee record; they have stated that in answers to parliamentary questions and in letters. The Prime Minister and Secretaries of State should be given the opportunity to discuss their position on the Bill on the Floor of the House during later stages.

Thirdly, when a Bill has such support and is the subject of such attention from the general public and from 6.5 million disabled people, it should be allowed to be voted on, and not left to fall foul of the parliamentary timetable.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I fully agree with the argument that there is plenty of time in this parliamentary Session to get the Bill through. Last year, Parliament sat for only seven months out of 12, so there would have been time then. The chances are that we shall not sit much longer this year.

There is another way in which the Bill can complete its parliamentary progress. I have consulted my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman). We use this debate as an opportunity for the Government to respond. Opposition Front-Bench Members would seriously consider granting half an Opposition day—our parliamentary time—if the Government would guarantee to give the other half and would give a guarantee to get the Bill through, as has been the case for many private Members' Bills in the past. If the Government responded to that, the Bill would get on the statute book.

Sir John Hannam: I am sure that ways have been found in the past, as the hon. Member says, in which to provide the time. There are all sorts of different ways, and I hope that we shall get some positive proposals from the Government once the House has passed the motion overwhelmingly today. That is the key first step.

We know that some hon. Members may have serious concerns about the drafting of the legislation. The sponsors and supporters of the Bill have expressed—indeed, we have acted on—a willingness to listen and to take on board those concerns whenever they complement the overall aim of eliminating discrimination against disabled people.

The current situation has been going on for too long. The Bill is the 13th attempt to introduce such legislation. Over past years, the subject has been taken up by individual Members who have received through their post bags and through surgery doors many examples of discrimination.

At the Prime Minister's behest, the all-party disablement group was involved with discussions with the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People. After several months of discussions, the officers of the group decided that the Government's approach, which had the same objective of removing discrimination, but by means of education and persuasion alone, Department by Department, was insufficient as a strategy for ending discrimination against disabled people.

I now turn to the procedural aspects of the motion. I know that I am not exactly the flavour of the month with my Whips Office for choosing this opportunity to table a motion calling on them to find extra time for a private Member's Bill. I also know that they understand my motives for doing so, and my deep conviction that I must do everything possible to assist the cause of removing unfair discrimination.

Private Members' Bills and their procedure would confuse and intimidate anyone. It is to the credit of the hon. Member for Kingswood that he has been able to pilot the Bill so smoothly so far in its proceedings. It would baffle and anger even our greatest cynics if the Bill were to be left hanging in mid-air when so much work has been undertaken by so many people, inside and outside Parliament, to see it through its previous stages.

We all know that procedure can be used to stop unpopular or contentious Bills progressing through the private Member's Bill channels, yet this Bill is neither contentious nor unpopular. Even those with concerns about the details of the Bill support its underlying aim of ridding society of unfair discrimination against disabled people. As we have already seen, the Bill has the support not only of the majority of the House of Commons, but of the majority of the House of Lords.

The history of private Members' Bills suggests that Bills that receive an uncontested Second Reading progress

through the remaining stages even if the Government have to give extra time for them to do so. In the 1979-80 Session, the Representation of the People Bill achieved an unopposed Second Reading with 42 minutes of debate. It passed through its Committee stage when it was approved with no discussion by a Committee of the whole House. The Bill's Report and Third Reading stages were taken on the nod on the fifth day.

Two of the most contentious post-war private Members' Bills, the Murder (Abolition of Death Penalty) Bill and the Abortion Bill of 1967, provide ample evidence of Bills that could not have been enacted within the time allotted to private Members' Bills. Indeed, the Murder (Abolition of Death Penalty) Bill had an extra day provided by the Government to allow it to complete its Report stage.

As one political commentator writes:

"All the classic private Members' legislation of the 1960s obtained Government time, and none of the Bills involved would have received Royal Assent without the additional time."

Leo Abse's Sexual Offences Bill was introduced as a ten-minute Bill in the 1966-67 Session. It had an unopposed Second Reading, and he persuaded the Government to give the Bill Government time in Committee. On Report, the Bill again ran out of time, so the Government agreed to provide an extra Friday. After that extra day, the Bill still had not finished its Report stage, so the Government offered more time on a Monday. The House sat from 10 pm until 5.50 am the following morning. Hon. Members would be willing to do the same to get this legislation through.

The very important Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970—the "Alf Morris Act" promoted by the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe—was given extra time by the Government so that it could complete its parliamentary progress.

We are not asking for the impossible or even for the original. Between 1951 and 1985, 64 private Members' Bills were given Government time, of which 33 were granted extra time by Conservative Governments. Library records show that, between 1979 and 1986, four private Members' balloted Bills were given Government time. All those Bills show that, where there is a parliamentary will, there is a parliamentary way.

I am not asking the Government to create a precedent. I have looked at the Library's books and records on the matter. The final paragraph of the Library's book on Government and private Members' Bills makes interesting reading. It says:

"In conclusion. The pattern which emerges is clear. The Government is crucially involved in the private members' bills legislative process. In fact, it is the key actor. Most importantly, it is evident that most successful back-bench Bills are now Government Bills in all but name. None of this means that the Government is totally omnipotent. As we shall see later, the MPs and interest groups involved with promoting private members' business have some ways of fighting back—but they are very limited."

That is a good analysis of the situation that we face.

There is no reason why private Members' Bills should not occupy Government time if the Government are willing, or parliamentary time if Parliament approves. If the Government do not give the Bill adequate time, disabled people and the general public will know that the Bill did not succeed because the Government opposed it.

What is worse is that they will know that the Government did not openly oppose it. They will know that the Government would not give each Member of Parliament the opportunity to vote on an issue that affects, on average, 10,000 of his or her constituents. They would know that, instead, the Government used parliamentary procedures to block the Bill, when they could just as easily have used parliamentary procedures to help it through.

As joint chairman of the all-party disablement group and one of the sponsors of the Bill, I urge all hon. Members to support the motion which calls for adequate time to be given to the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill so that it can complete its remaining stages. Let us take this opportunity to put paid, once and for all, to the shameful exclusion of disabled people from our society.

10.9 am

Mr. Roger Berry (Kingswood): I congratulate the hon. Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) on his good luck in the ballot and, of course, on his excellent choice of motion.

I was serving with other members of the Standing Committee who were considering the Bill at its last sitting when it was announced that the hon. Member had come top in the ballot for private Member's motions. I can assure the House that the enthusiasm and the excitement of hon. Members in that Committee was probably rivalled only by the enthusiasm and excitement for that result in the Government Whips Office. It was cheered warmly by all members of the Committee, who saw it as an opportunity, as the hon. Member for Exeter has said, of furthering a laudable Bill.

Why is the motion necessary? The history of the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill clearly shows why we need to ask the Government for sufficient time to complete its remaining stages. It is extremely important to say that, when I was lucky in the ballot for private Members' Bills early in this Session and I chose to pick up the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, it was not a new idea. It was not a new Bill. The case for comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation to protect disabled people had been around for a very long time, and the details of the Bill proposed at Second Reading had been available for all interested parties for well over two years.

In addition to paying tribute to the hon. Member for Exeter and all right hon. and hon. Members who served on the Standing Committee, for whom the House ought to express its gratitude, I especially pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris). It would be extraordinary if I did not do so, because, as the first Minister for Disabled People, he commissioned a committee of inquiry early in 1979 to examine the issue.

However, consideration of the matter goes back further than 1979, because disabled people and their organisations were campaigning for the precise provisions in the Bill in the early 1970s. But, in early 1979, my right hon. Friend set up a committee on restrictions against disabled people and, as we all know, that committee reported to the Government in 1982. Its report was available 12 years ago for all who wished to consult it.

Three of the recommendations in that report are three of the essential pillars in the Bill before the House: first, there should be legislation to make discrimination on the ground of disability illegal: secondly, the law should cover all areas where discrimination occurs: thirdly, there should be a regulatory body or a commission with powers to investigate, conciliate and, if necessary, take legal action on individual complaints of discrimination.

[Mr. Roger Berry]

The basic principles of the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill have been a matter for public debate for at least 12 years. Consultation on the present form of the Bill, as I shall say again in a moment, is welcome, and along with my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter—sorry. I am sorry if I have got the hon. Member for Exeter into even more trouble with his Whips by referring to him as an hon. Friend. However, I must say that I regard him as both a friend and as honourable.

Of course, as the hon. Member for Exeter said, we have met various organisations, and we have given an unqualified commitment to meet any organisations which have a legitimate interest in the Bill, but the proposals have been on the table for 12 years. Over that time, any organisation could have asked to see the Minister, the Secretary of State, the all-party disablement group, or anybody concerned with the Bill. Indeed, many of those organisations have done that.

So let us be clear about consultation. It is right and proper that we should consult as much as we can before Report, and that is happening, but there have also been many years during which that consultation could and did take place. The Bill is not new, and the provisions are not new.

Mr. Rowlands: In the light of what my hon. Friend and others have said, does that not mean that the argument of lack of consultation cannot possibly be used as an alibi to impede the progress of the Bill? Surely the Bill is absolutely justifiable. It has had a great deal of consultation, it has had 10 years of thorough preparation and therefore should be carried forward.

Mr. Berry: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We have tried to consult. For goodness' sake, a private Member's Bill which concerns a matter that has been in the public domain for 12 years is before the House. There have been extensive debates and discussions—between the all-party disablement group and the Minister, between the all-party disablement group and the Prime Minister, and between the all-party disablement group and anybody who wanted to talk about such issues. I have attended meeting after meeting where the matters have been discussed.

It is absurd to say to a humble Member who happens to have been lucky in the ballot that he should have consulted even more. Those who support the Bill are doing as much as they can. If there has not been adequate consultation over the years, I do not feel that I must accept all the responsibility for that.

Given that history, and the fact that, three days before the Second Reading on 8 March, the Prime Minister said:

"I hope that the Bill will go into Committee for detailed examination of its provisions".—[*Official Report*, 8 March 1994; Vol. 239, c. 147.],

many assumed—I think that it was reasonable to assume—that objections to the principles of the Bill had been withdrawn. After all, on each and every previous occasion, the Government had blocked the Bill at that stage, so it was reasonable to assume, as many hon. Members did, that the Government no longer objected to the principles of Bill, but wanted to examine the details. Whether that was as a result of a genuine conversion, as I hope, or whether it was the result of the superb lobbying by disabled people and their organisations, which I am sure contributed to our awareness of the issues, or whether it was a bit of both, I do not really mind.

For the first time ever, there was not a single objection to the Second Reading of the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill. Strictly, it was carried by 231 votes to nil, but I must acknowledge the four Tellers, who were doing their job. If they had not been doing that job, I know that they would have voted in favour of the Bill as well, so 235 Members supported the Bill on 11 March and not a single Member was opposed to the basic idea and the well-known principles of the Bill, or went through the Lobby to vote no. Not one hon. Member said no.

As the Bill went into Committee, in response to another parliamentary question on 12 April, the Prime Minister said:

"What we need to do in Committee and thereafter is to look at the practical implications of the Bill and that will be done."—[*Official Report*, 12 April 1994; Vol. 241, c. 15.]

In Committee, what did we do? As the hon. Member for Exeter said, first, I moved a sittings motion to indicate that we ought to be prepared to meet on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, mornings and afternoons, for however long it took for the detailed examination, as requested and promised by the Prime Minister, to take place. We even decided not to sit one morning because the Minister was unable to attend, and we felt that it was right that our deliberations did not continue without the benefit of his contribution.

In Committee on 12 April the Minister said:

"I am not arguing that the Bill is not necessary."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee C*, 12 April 1994; c. 60.]

I know that that is a double negative, but many of us read *Private Eye* and we know that, when one says that one is not arguing that the Bill is not necessary, in *Private Eye*-speak that means that one probably thinks that it is a really good idea.

We were encouraged by that and, as the hon. Member for Exeter also said, no Government amendments were tabled. Given the Prime Minister's desire for the "detailed examination", that seemed a little strange, but supporters of the Bill indicated that the door was always open for Government amendments. I even borrowed a phrase from my hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe and said that the door was just about falling off its hinges. We were begging for Government amendments to deal with any concerns that the Government might have, but none was forthcoming.

We were not discouraged. The supporters of the Bill tabled between 20 and 30 amendments that were designed specifically to address the concerns raised by the Government and by representatives of several organisations. I repeat the point made by the hon. Member for Exeter: that organisations have requested meetings with us, and that some meetings have been arranged. Other organisations have requested meetings and, again, meetings will be arranged.

The argument has moved considerably. No one argues now that education and persuasion are sufficient. That argument was not advanced on Second Reading and it did not crop up in Committee. It is no longer argued that legislation cannot work. Again, that argument was not advanced on Second Reading or in Committee. After all, if anyone believed that, what would be the future of sex discrimination and race relations legislation?

Before we examined the Bill in Committee, the Government had two genuine concerns about the Bill. First, there was the possibility that the Disability Rights Commission might have a policy-making function. The Government, quite legitimately, would not wish that function to be delegated. Secondly, they were concerned about costs. I believe that those were the only two remaining obstacles to the Bill.

So what did we do? We moved an amendment to ensure that codes of practice recommended by the Disability Rights Commission should be introduced through the Secretary of State, subject to parliamentary approval. As a democrat, I believe that to be the right approach. I also believe that the amendment undermined an objection that the Government had to the original Bill. We have made it clear that codes of practice will be a matter for the House to approve or not.

As the hon. Member for Exeter said, we moved an amendment that had the effect of phasing in the Bill's provisions. Again, that will ultimately be subject to parliamentary approval. Costs will be incurred by the Treasury when hon. Members decide that that is right. No one else will make that decision. As a democrat, I think that that is right. I hope, however, as I know most people do, that the Bill's provisions will be implemented quickly. There is no reason for delay.

We have taken head on the Government's objection about costs. As I have said, costs will be incurred when Parliament decides that that is appropriate. I do not know what else we could have done in Committee to take on board the two remaining objections that the Government had to the Bill. Of the 20 or 30 amendments tabled, the Minister voted against only one. That amendment happened to relate to codes of practice being subject to parliamentary approval. I remain mystified that that was the one amendment he voted against, but in the spirit of good will I shall not press that further.

The key point is that the Minister did not oppose any of the clauses. As I have said, he opposed only one amendment. To borrow a phrase that he used in Committee extensively, I do not want to quibble about that. I think that the right hon. Gentleman was generally extremely helpful. When responding to an amendment to clause 1, he used the words:

"Although I would not advise anyone to vote against the amendment".

Later, he said:

"My doubts about the amendment are not acute."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee C*, 12 April 1994, c. 46-50.]

During the debate on clause 3, he said:

"I have no objection whatsoever to the amendments".

At a later stage, he said:

"That discussion has served us well."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee C*, 30 March 1994, c.10-20.]

On clause 4, when we discussed discrimination in employment—a crucial part of the Bill—the Minister said that he had "tremendous sympathy" with what the sponsors were trying to achieve, and that he did not want their hopes to be destroyed because of reservations that he had expressed. At an earlier stage, he said:

"I do not want to delay the passing of clause 4."—

That obviously warmed the hearts of all Labour Members in Committee. Now I am in trouble with my Whips.

Another important part of the Bill related to the provision of good services and facilities. Clause 6 was the key remaining provision. When discussing the clause, the Minister said:

"I have a great deal of sympathy with the points made."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee C*, 12 April 1994, c. 70-90.]

When we moved on to clause 9 on enforcement, he said:

"I do not want to delay the Committee in dealing with the clause . . . I do not oppose it."

When it came to new clause 3 and the definition of disability—I know that definitions have occupied some hon. Members' minds for a long time—the Minister said:

"I compliment the authors of the new clause".

The prinicipal author sits on my right, my right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe. He continued:

"I praise them for having produced it at such short notice."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee C*, 13 April 1994, c, 110-112.]

The right hon. Gentleman acknowledged that members of the Committee were busy producing amendments, even at short notice, and even ones that were praiseworthy.

In summary, on Second Reading there was an overwhelming vote in favour of the principles set out in the Bill. No one voted against it.

Mr. Fabricant: Will the hon. Gentleman reconfirm for the benefit of the House and for the record that the Bill is not a positive discriminatory measure? The effect of the Bill is simply to ask for equal rights. I wish to declare a personal interest. I have a researcher—I have already discussed this matter with him—who is severely disabled. The greatest insult would have been to employ him because he was disabled. I employed him because he was bloody good at his job, if I may say so. I should like the hon. Gentleman to confirm what I have put to him.

Mr. Berry: The answer is that the hon. Gentleman is absolutely correct. The Bill is all about securing for disabled people a statutory right against unfair discrimination. It is about rights. It is about ensuring that disabled people have the same rights as everybody else—no more but no less. The hon. Gentleman is therefore correct. No doubt that is why on Second Reading there was an overwhelming vote in support of the Bill.

The Prime Minister, rightly in my view, felt it necessary to promise detailed examination in Committee. I believe that that examination took place. I hope very much, notwithstanding my comments a few moments ago, or perhaps because of them, that the Minister will confirm that we discussed every clause and amendments to them. As supporters of the Bill, we went out of our way to table amendments to address the concerns that the Government had raised. Surely all must be well for Report. Unfortunately, as the hon. Member for Exeter has implied, all is not necessarily well for Report, and that is why we need the motion.

I have already referred to the Government Whips Office. The hon. Member for Exeter has said that he is not exactly flavour of the month with the Government Whips Office. What is going on? Could it be that public statements to the effect, "We look forward to the Bill going into Committee and being subjected to detailed examination," run slightly counter to what is being said in private? There is no doubt that that is the position.

I was engaged in a debate on the radio last Friday. Another hon. Member was involved who is not in his place, so I cannot name him. He asserted what many hon. Members have said to me: "Of course, the Bill will be talked out on Report." We all know that there is some deviousness about. In public, opposition to the Bill in

[Mr. Berry]

terms of votes or hostile amendments in Committee is frankly difficult to find. However, we are told in private that the Bill will be talked out.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: As the hon. Gentleman has devoted such a great deal of his time to this subject, in order to allay one of the principal possible objections to the Bill from employers' organisations, can he tell us what the likely cost on employers, and on the country as a whole, is likely to be? If we are to consider the Bill genuinely in the House, we must have some idea of those costs.

Mr. Berry: I cannot give an estimate of the costs. The Government have been seeking information from various companies and I had hoped that, before this stage, they would have published the results of their rather extensive research.

However, the key point about costs is that the Bill specifically ensures that, if any provision would cause undue hardship to an enterprise, firm or business, that provision would effectively be waived. Undue hardship specifically relates to the cost of adaptations that might be necessary. A whole clause is devoted to the definition of reasonableness in that context. I hope that the hon. Member will agree that that is the best that can be done, and that it is perfectly adequate.

I have suggested that what is being said publicly about the Government's position on the Bill is somewhat different from what is being said privately. I have two comments about that. First, I believe that the Bill is far too important to be treated in that way. This is not a game. Politics is not a game: it is a serious business. It is right and proper that disabled people and their organisations should know exactly where people stand on the issue. This is not an issue in respect of which politicians of any party should be playing games.

Secondly, I believe that the tactics which some fear the Government might use to talk out the Bill on Report will further bring Parliament into disrepute. At a time when public opinion of politicians in this country is, if not at an all-time low, at a pretty low level, such behaviour would only confirm the view that some politicians simply cannot be trusted.

In South Africa this week, discrimination on the grounds of race is beginning to come to an end. I am sure that many decent people have had tears of joy in their eyes and have felt admiration for the political activists who have brought that about. Why is it that this week, in this country, we cannot start to remove discrimination against disabled people at least to ensure that their case will be properly considered? Why cannot we shed a few tears of joy at the ending of discrimination against disabled people in this country? When will we be able to stop feeling anger towards those who still try to block this Bill?

The Bill, or something very like it, will of course eventually reach the statute book. No member of the Committee has any doubt about that. As I have said before, in years to come we will look back and wonder how on earth it could have taken so long for this measure to come about.

Why should disabled people accept any further delay? I do not believe that they should. I therefore support the motion and enthusiastically urge all hon. Members to do the same.

10.34 am

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): It may be convenient if I intervene at an early stage in the debate, although I know that many hon. Members wish to contribute to it in due course.

I have every sympathy with the concluding remarks, in particular, of the hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry), who was the main sponsor of the Bill. I acknowledge that we are addressing a deeply serious issue today and that we will be addressing it again next Friday. We discussed it on Second Reading and in Committee with considerable seriousness. The issue affects the lives of millions of our fellow citizens and it affects society as a whole because of its potential impact on the quality of life of many disabled people and the way in which society addresses their needs and abilities.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) on his exceedingly good fortune in drawing first place in the ballot for private Members' motions. He has provided us with another opportunity to discuss this very important issue which, it would be fair to acknowledge, has increasingly commanded the attention and concern of hon. Members and of the public at large as the years have passed since a Bill of this type was first introduced.

In practice, my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter has tabled a motion which is a plea for extra time for the Bill promoted by the hon. Member for Kingswood. My hon. Friend outlined the Bill's aims and the support that has been expressed by organisations of and for disabled people and the public at large for the passage of the Bill. He also drew attention to the increase in consultation with employers and other providers upon whom, inevitably, some costs would be bound to fall were any legislation of this type to be implemented.

Through his motion and by using a very proper procedural device, my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter is seeking to provide more time for a private Member's Bill. In essence, he wants the normal business of the House to be changed to allow extra time for a private Member's Bill. Despite the fact that I was Parliamentary Private Secretary to a former Leader of the House, Standing Orders of the House are not my main homework and I would not claim to be a master of every technicality and procedure of the House. However, it is my understanding that the Standing Orders, which were amended in February 1990, specifically preclude in Standing Order 13A the use of a private Member's motion to determine the "precedence, arrangement or timing" of business or

"allocating time to any proceedings"

or

"amending or varying any Standing Order".

My interpretation of that is that, whatever the outcome of our debate today, it cannot technically affect the progress or otherwise of the next stage of the Bill. It cannot affect the time that may be required for the Bill.

Mr. Skinner: We should place on the record the reason for that change in the Standing Orders. That change was made because, on at least two occasions, a Member came first in the ballot and decided to turn his day for a motion into a day for a Bill. While I have been a Member of this place, that practice started when the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) allowed Enoch Powell to take over his private Member's motion day to

pursue his Bill to prevent embryo research. I took part in that debate and used a parliamentary device to stop it. The practice was next used in relation to abortion.

The Standing Orders were changed only to prevent someone who had a victory in the ballot on private Members' motions from turning that Friday or Monday into a day to pursue a Bill. The hon. Member for Exeter has used only a motion; he has not used a Bill. That is the distinction. He is not attempting to do what was done on the two previous occasions. He is calling on the House to give a general voice, acclamation and support for the continuance of the Bill. He is also calling on his Government to repeat what has happened on other occasions—as he said, 64 occasions in all, including 33 times by a Tory Government—when Governments have allowed time for parliamentary Bills to proceed. Clearly, the two things are not the same and I hope that the Minister understands that.

Mr. Scott: I do not wish to clash with the hon. Gentleman on this issue. There are many other issues where I would relish a clash with him, but I think I shall duck a clash on procedure. The advice that I received was that, technically, whatever the genesis was for the change to our procedures and Standing Orders, the Standing Orders as they presently exist preclude the use of the motion in such a way. We should recognise that that is the reality of it, whatever precedents may have occurred before that specific change in our procedures took place. Governments of either persuasion may have also used other ways to meet the demands of the House.

The advice on procedure that I have been given, about which I am confident, is that it would not be possible for my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter—I think that he acknowledges this point—to use the motion to provide automatically for extra time and that the passage of the motion today would not automatically provide for that.

Mr. Berry: Notwithstanding what the Minister has said, can he confirm that there is nothing in the Standing Orders to prevent the Government from accepting the spirit of the motion and providing the time that it calls for? Can he confirm that there is nothing whatever to prevent the Government from doing that?

Mr. Scott: Indeed, I understand that the matter was raised yesterday in a question to my right hon. Friend the Lord President by the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne) as reported at column 386 of the *Official Report*. Obviously, I can go no further than my right hon. Friend went on that occasion. However, I certainly can confirm that it would be within the Government's powers to do that, although the Standing Orders certainly preclude the passage of the motion today—that is the point that I am making—from automatically providing time or extra time for the Bill.

I shall turn to the issues. Effectively, this is a procedural motion. However, in my brief remarks, I shall touch on some aspects of the Bill and our approach to the general issues, as my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter and the hon. Member for Kingswood did. I hope that our discussion today will not trespass on the time that we shall spend on Report next Friday, because that stage in itself is an important step in our parliamentary procedure.

When I heard that my hon. Friend had come first in the ballot, it came as no surprise when I found out the subject that he had chosen for our discussions today. It is yet another example of his deep commitment to improving the lives of disabled people, which he has demonstrated on many occasions. I acknowledge the reasons and the thinking behind his choice of motion.

As I said, there is an established handling procedure and, however strongly any of us may feel about the issue, we cannot deviate from it. That is not to say that the Government are not listening with care and sympathy to those who are actively campaigning for the Bill and properly using every opportunity to ensure that it reaches the statute book and that the thinking behind it is widely understood in the country outside.

It has already been said that on Second Reading, on 11 March, I reaffirmed the undertaking given earlier by the Prime Minister that the Bill would be examined and discussed thoroughly in Committee. It has been acknowledged by my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Kingswood that we fulfilled that commitment in Committee. We thorougly examined and discussed the issues involved in eliminating discrimination against disabled people against a range of amendments and discussions of the clauses in the Bill.

It is fair to say that, whatever our specific interests, as members of the Committee we entered into the work with a shared recognition that discrimination exists, that it is wrong and that more steps need to be taken to tackle it. The differences that cropped up in Committee, as they have cropped up in other discussions on the matter, were about the steps that need to be taken to tackle that discrimination.

I am grateful to my hon. Friends and, indeed, to Labour Members for the consideration and objectivity that they brought to our discussions in Committee. The discussion was conducted in a calm and constructive way. That enabled us to identify a degree of common ground between the sponsors of the Bill and the Government. Although the good-natured atmosphere in Committee did not prevent us from touching on some sensitive areas of difference, there was considerable common ground. Some other complex issues that had been discussed earlier were touched on again in Committee. Once again, that was a healthy part of our procedure in Committee.

It is fair to say that concerns are still being expressed by employers in industry and elsewhere, and by providers of goods, services and facilities, about the potential costs of the Bill. We must recognise the consultation that is now taking place. I wish that that consultation had taken place earlier, but I am certainly pleased to see that the all-party group and the sponsors of the Bill are now discussing with employers and other providers the question of costs. I recognise the amendment that we made in Committee to ensure that the impact of costs will come into the hands of the Secretaries of State who are concerned with the specific issues in the elimination of discrimination.

There were some reservations about the technicalities of drafting, but I do not want to go into them now. However, I see some positive ground and acknowledgement that parts of the Bill may act as indicators for possible solutions to the elimination of discrimination against disabled people. I reiterate my strong commitment and that of the Government to the shared aims of the sponsors of the Bill. We recognise the weight of support that the Bill has attracted. We are responding in our thinking to those pressures and we will continue to do so.

[Mr. Scott]

I certainly reiterate what the Prime Minister said—the quote has been used frequently in our discussions. He said that we are seeking to see what common ground exists and what ways there are forward.

As I said, I am not here today to discuss in depth what happened in Committee, because that is properly the function of the debate on Report which will take place next Friday. Proper debate will take place then, but I reiterate that the Government remain committed to the elimination of discrimination. We have already made further progress since the end of the debate in Committee.

Only last week, the mobility unit of the Department of Transport and the passenger transport executive group published a new set of guidelines aimed at architects, transport operators and planners involved in the design of public transport terminals and interchanges. That means that areas such as bus and railway stations, including items such as accommodation and furniture, will be covered, whether we are creating new facilities or adapting old buildings and shops.

Those good practices are important if designers are to meet the needs of all passengers, including those with disability and particularly those with mobility needs. That is one small illustration of the progress that the Government are determined to continue to make in that important area. In housing, transport and services facilities, we will continue to press forward with that work.

In education, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education recently laid before Parliament a draft code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs. Some 30,000 copies of that code were sent out and more than 1,000 written responses were received, the vast majority of which welcomed the new initiative. The code is being redrafted, it has been welcomed by the all-party children and disablement groups, and it will be considered by the House shortly.

The House will have welcomed the announcement of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment about the access to work scheme. We know the scope of that scheme and we know that widespread concerns were expressed about the need for employers to make contributions towards the cost of the implementation of that scheme.

My right hon. Friend, in taking account of the suggestion made by the all-party disablement group, has decided to introduce the scheme without seeking an employer contribution for a year, and then to review the position. I believe and hope that the House will agree that that is a positive response from the Government to representations which they have received.

Much better progress than was expected has been made in placing disabled people into jobs. The Employment Service had a target last year that 3 per cent. of all its placings of unemployed people should be disabled people, which would have led to 44,000 disabled people being placed in work by the specialist staff of the Department and through job clubs. I am pleased to say that it looks as though more than 50,000 people will be placed in such jobs, apart from the large number of disabled people who find jobs through the Employment Service's self-service system.

Changes have also been announced to the funding arrangements for the supported employment programme —what we used to call sheltered placements. Again, we must recognise that that is important progress. The Government are determined to continue with that progress, and we are determined also to look at the provisions of the Bill and to see what common ground can be established between the Government and the Bill's sponsors.

Today, we are dealing with a procedural motion, the implications of which I outlined at the beginning of my remarks. We will come to Report next week with an attitude which firmly reflects and reinforces the commitments made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, and we will pursue the remaining stages of the Bill in that spirit. We will return to the issue next Friday, and the Government will continue to study and reflect on the comments which undoubtedly will be made in those discussions and, in due course, we will make clear to the House our conclusions about the further consideration of the matters.

10.52 am

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): May I first apologise to the Minister and to the House for briefly being absent at the beginning of his speech? Unlike the Committee stage, when we had excellent cross-party co-operation, there seems to have been a small hitch about when the Minister was to speak this morning.

The Bill has been endlessly debated and has been amended and perfected in a process of scrutiny which few measures in the history of Parliament have undergone. It has been repeatedly introduced by an indefatigable band of warriors, and supported by all-party groups. It passed all its stages in the other place in a previous incarnation, and it has now completed its passage through Committee in the House.

It is a tribute to the way in which a piece of legislation can be supported across party lines, and can be burnished, honed and improved. Having a fair amount of experience of the legislative process in the House, and particularly in Committee, I am sure that I speak for many other hon. Members on both sides when I say, would that all pieces of legislation could have such scrutiny and such a quality of detailed investigation.

We are talking about a finely honed piece of legislation. I have been involved in discussions on Bills where the Government have totally changed their mind about the Bill halfway through the Committee.

Mr. Keith Bradley (Manchester, Withington): Not often enough.

Mr. Sheerman: As my hon. Friend says, perhaps not often enough.

We all know the problems of legislation that has been hurriedly introduced. Minds must be changed halfway through, and massive numbers of Government amendments must be introduced. There have been criticisms this week about the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill which have related to hasty legislation which has been implemented too quickly with insufficient thought.

One cannot say that about this Bill, which has been given more attention than any other Bill. So exhaustively has the Bill been debated and its virtues extolled and listed by those giving wide-ranging support from all parts of the House, it becomes—even for a politician—quite difficult to say something new about it; the arguments have been made so well.

On Second Reading, I drew the attention of the House to the remarks of Ernest Bevin on the Disabled Persons (Employment) Bill in 1943 and on the 1944 Act. I thought that the level of debate and the vision that he showed in the House at that time was an inspiration to us, 50 years later.

I do not intend to waste the time of the House by repeating what others have said most ably. I congratulate the hon. Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) on providing the House with this opportunity. It is pushing on very nicely the progress of the Bill. With regard to what the Minister said about the debate in a week's time, and given that there are no deviations from the norm and we get a proper amount of time for Report, this will be seen as an important milestone in the progress of the Bill.

I want to do something unusual, and confront the reality of the situation of the Bill. I want to put the mind of the Government at rest on the problems that they seem to think surround the Bill. I hope that the House will bear with me while I look at some of the ideas of the Government and of the Conservative party. I will try to show to the House, and particularly to the Government and their supporters on the Back Benches who have not yet signed the early-day motion or publicly come out in support of the Bill, that there is nothing to be afraid of.

I want to confront the reality of the Bill. Whatever else is said today, a private Member's Bill—even one of the quality of that introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry)—must depend, as all hon. Members are aware, on a fair wind from the Government. It is a comment on the House that all of us are aware that a private Member's role, and his independence and ability to introduce legislation, has been seriously reduced over a long period by Governments of all political parties.

If we want to look for a villain in the piece, we should look to Asquith during the first world war. He chopped the amount of private Members' time in the House, and it has never been retrieved. During the second world war, all private Members' legislation was suspended and it was not until 1947-48 that 10 motions and 10 private Members' Fridays were reintroduced.

That is a poor contribution to a modern democracy from Back-Bench Members of Parliament. Wearing my Back-Bench hat, I say that we have put up with it for too long. A private Member has a scant chance of introducing legislation and of its succeeding. We are, as ever in the House, far too dependent on the Whips and on the normal channels for deciding what is to be debated in the House and what makes progress.

I say that in a parliamentary sense. For far too long, the country has been democratically short-changed by the amount of time and opportunity for the private Member to get his legislation and ideas pushed through the House and given a fair amount of time. I do not entirely blame this Government or previous Governments. If responsibility lies anywhere, it lies with private Members. We have been careless in the custody of our responsibilities. At some stage, private Members—Conservative Members and my hon. Friends—will have to get together and put that right. We shall have to bring pressure to improve the situation.

Mr. Fabricant: I have a hypothetical question for the hon. Gentleman. If there were ever a Labour Government in the future, would it change the position? Would the hon. Gentleman like to commit that possible future Labour Government to amending the practices of the House to allow extra time for private Members' motions and business?

Mr. Sheerman: I welcome that intervention from the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant). He will know that the Labour party does not have a bad record in government. I mentioned 1947 and 1948, when we reintroduced private Members' time. We have quite a record in terms of introducing Select Committees, and so on. The hon. Gentleman probably joins me in making the point that there has to be greater emphasis on the independent role of Members of Parliament. The stark situation today in the real world is that private Members' Bills do not normally succeed unless they are entirely non-controversial or they have a fair wind from the Government. That is the truth. Everyone in the House will recognise that. If the Bill does not get a fair wind from the Government, it will fail. There is no doubt about that.

I want briefly to examine why the Government should change their mind and support the Bill. In an intervention in the speech of the hon. Member for Exeter, I suggested that there were rumours that the House would rise early for the summer recess. So there is no excuse for not allowing time for the Bill to complete its passage.

People will be frustrated if the Bill is not given a fair wind. When our electors support a Bill, the frustration that they feel is not that a Bill comes to the House, is given a fair hearing and voted on. Their frustration is that a Bill is debated, but there is no opportunity once it comes back from Committee to the House for it to make progress on its merits. That is the frustration that the disabled lobby and people with disabilities will feel if the Bill fails to make progress because of time. We must have the Government with us.

I want to do a rather unusual thing. I want to examine the worries of Ministers' gurus and the ideologues in his party. I shall examine quickly three recent speeches—the Minister would say that they were very important speeches—made by three leading members of the Minister's party.

A fair analysis of the ideas of the modern Conservative party, certainly as expressed by its ideologues and leaders, would suggest not that there was anything wrong with the Bill but that it went along with the grain of political and ideological thinking in the Conservative party. I highlight the fact that, even given the philosophy of the modern high priests of the Tory party, the introduction of a piece of legislation such as the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill goes with the grain rather than against it.

Let us start with perhaps the least cerebral of the three thinkers—the Prime Minister. He made a speech which I believe was a serious attempt to restate his interpretation of modern Conservatism. He called the speech "Conservatism in the 1990s: Our Common Purpose". It was delivered, of all places, at the Carlton club on 3 February 1993. He said:

> "When I became Leader of our Party, I spoke of 'carrying forward the Conservative tradition'. I spoke of Conservatism as 'a common sense view of life from a tolerant perspective'. I set out my aim to create a 'classless society'—and 'a nation at ease with itself'. A Britain in which effort is rewarded; and everyone has a stake in our country's future. A Britain where every youngster can aim high; every family can build for its own future. Dignity, security, independence, self-respect—these are the human aspirations we understand and we endorse. Conservatism in the 1990s has the ambition to bring them within the grasp of every citizen."

[Mr. Sheerman]

If that is not a ringing endorsement of the Bill, nothing is. It is a ringing endorsement of what my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood is trying to do in his Bill.

The Prime Minister continued:

"These are the instincts of a free people; an enterprising people; a generous people; a tolerant people. We believe in fostering freedom by giving people more power to choose for themselves. We believe in fostering tolerance by respecting the individual; by recognising every citizen's power to choose . . . we have four cardinal principles: the principles of choice, ownership, responsibility and opportunity for all."

That is the most extensive quotation from the Prime Minister that I have ever made, but I make the point to Conservative Members. He continued:

"we have always worked to meet people's aspiration to own their own homes; to have greater opportunities for themselves and their children; to enjoy the respect that follows from the exercise of choice. This has always been a great Tory tradition—a continuous thread in our thinking. When Disraeli spoke of 'the elevation of the condition of the people' he made it clear, even then, that he meant all the people: 'all the numerous classes of the realm, classes alike and equal before the law'. If this was not exactly 'a classless society', it already expressed many of the aspirations of one: the equal treatment of all citizens by the state, and the chance of advancement for all."

I am tempted to say that my case rests. Our case for the Bill rests because the Prime Minister and, I am sure, the hon. Member for Exeter will appreciate those quotations.

We have a Government and a Prime Minister in his most thoughtful mode giving the basis of what he sees as opportunities for all. We are talking today about opportunities for all disabled people.

I do not want to leave my quotations with the Prime Minister. Some Conservative Members do not listen only to the Prime Minister. Although some of them respect him as a Prime Minister, they do not respect him as a party philosopher, an ideologue or a great thinker about the future of Conservatism.

However, Conservative Members might listen to two other voices which I shall quote briefly. The first is the Secretary of State for Social Security, the right hon. Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley). [*Laughter.*] In some wings of the party, he is seen as an ideologue and guru. He gave an important speech to *The Spectator* annual lecture on Wednesday 30 March 1994. That is the right-wing journal, not the spectator sport publication.

The right hon. Gentleman's speech was entitled—a somewhat hackneyed title—"Conservative Ideas and Ideals Will Continue to Triumph". That was quite as stirring as the Prime Minister's title. He said:

"The intellectual tide which dominated the 80s is still flowing powerfully in our direction. Ideas of choice and competition, less government rather than more, self-reliance rather than dependency—still ring true with most people's experience and chime with their values."

Speaking of his long-term review of social security, he said that the Government's aim was

"also to reform the Social Security system on Conservative principles to make it a better system. That means, first encouraging personal responsibility. Second, we must try to reduce disincentives—to work, save, and provide for one's own family.

That is why we introduced Family Credit. And why I am introducing a disregard for child care costs to help parents return to work. Third, we must focus help on those in need . . . we should redouble our efforts to reduce other people's dependency—on government in general and local government in particular."

It is interesting to note that the right hon. Gentleman concluded his speech with a quote from Churchill. He said:

"'Trust the people'. Winston Churchill's own words express the thought better than I or anyone else could manage: 'Let the people use their good common sense, multiply the choices which are open to them at every difficult phase in their lives. Make freedom spring from its source in their hearts and then indeed you will have a country which with wise government may be made to play a great part in the world.'"

I am sure that Conservative Members would agree that that is yet another endorsement of the Bill. It has been offered from one of their own Secretaries of State or, in common parlance, it is straight from right hon. Gentleman's box.

I want to finish with a quote from the real high priest of the Conservative party and I know that you will enjoy it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Last Friday, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, the right hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo), made a speech to the North-East Fife Conservative Association. He said:

"I have no doubt at all the philosophy that shapes Conservative policy is closest to the beliefs of the majority of the British people.

We understand that it is our first duty to govern for the nation as a whole, not for partisan interests, to take decisions which will be judged wise in the long term, not just popular in the short term, to pursue the difficult virtues of thrift and providence rather than the easy option of satisfying every immediate demand."

One of the most marked features of the Bill is that it is not the result of yesterday's latest campaign. It is the result of one of the longest running political campaigns. Twelve attempts have been made to introduce such a Bill and this is the 13th. It is the culmination of years and years of effort by tens of thousands of people and hundreds of organisations. Those people do not represent a few siren voices.

I know that Conservative Members are obsessed with the notion of a few people. It brings to mind the popular expression of Burke about the crickets chirping under the leaves—there may have been many cows in the field, but all that could be heard were those half a dozen crickets. Conservative ideologues are keen to argue that we should listen to the quiet majority. It is interesting to recall that a year ago the Prime Minister described it as the "silent majority", but the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has changed that term to the "quiet majority". They mean the same thing.

The fear is that a few people get the attention of the media and railroad through the House bad legislation, which imposes enormous duties and responsibilities on business and the community. It is thought that such legislation is very expensive, fouls up the economy and generally does a disservice to the country. I understand that obsession, although I do not agree with it. Conservative Members could hardly claim that the campaign for civil rights for disabled people comes in that category.

The campaign for those rights is run by the quiet majority. Those people have gone unheard for years. They have not had the chance to articulate their rights and demands or fulfil their ability to be full citizens. They are the very people to whom the Conservative Government should listen, especially if there is any truth behind the speeches of the ideologues, philosophers and gurus from whom I have quoted.

The Bill to which we are urging the Government to devote time and consideration is absolutely in the grain of those thinkers. I will not delay the House with any more quotations, although I could go on.

Mr. Charles Hendry (High Peak): Do go on.

Mr. Sheerman: I have quoted those Conservative gurus to show that there is nothing to be afraid of but fear itself.

Conservative Members may argue that the Bill would be expensive to implement. They may argue that it would impose many regulations when another Bill, which has just finished its Committee stage, is designed to deregulate. They are worried that the Bill that we are discussing would centralise. The fact is, however, that the Bill would free that quiet majority, that enormous number of people.

A recent poll revealed that 75 per cent. of the population know someone with a disability well. That is equivalent to far more people than the usual quoted figure of 10,000 people with a disability in each constituency. It also covers the carers and families. We are talking not just about 6.25 million people with disabilities, but about the majority of the people who are touched by disability.

We are talking about the quiet majority. If Conservative Members are serious about the beliefs that have underpinned the Conservative party for the past 150 years, they must accept that the Bill is in tune with them. The Bill will do no harm to, or interfere with, people's ability to make a living; nor will it impose too many regulations. On the contrary, it will free a potential in our country that will aid the very process that Conservative Members believe to govern their party.

In the past few weeks, I have witnessed some interesting changes in parliamentary language. I have been here for 14 years and suddenly all sorts of things can be said that were judged unparliamentary when I first entered the House. I should like to conclude by breaking a minor rule, which the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire got away with earlier. He said that he chose his researcher, who has a severe disability, because he was a bloody good researcher. We support the Bill and we believe that Conservative Members should support it because it is a bloody good Bill.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is the word "bloody" considered to be parliamentary language?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): There are no words listed in "Erskine May" as inappropriate. It is for the judgment of the Chair. I thought that in the particular context in which that word was originally used it was appropriate. I do not applaud the fact that it was reused later by another hon. Member and would suggest that it is not repeated.

11.18 am

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): I whole-heartedly support the principle behind the Bill because no one who is kind hearted and humane would want to discriminate against the disabled. I therefore pay my respects to the hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry), for his dedication to the Bill, and to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), who is the original author of it.

Why are we in politics if not because we want to help those less able than ourselves? I am always very grateful that the good Lord provider has given me good health thus far and I value that greatly. I would not want to be one of the long-term sick or disabled.

I am sure that the 6.5 million disabled people in the country will welcome the Bill. However, we are discussing a Bill that will have long-term implications for most people in the country, and therefore it is wise that we should consider it in detail and see whether there are any worries that should be tackled. Three questions need to be answered when we consider the Bill. What facilities and help are already available to the disabled and what is the Government's record in the sector? What are the implications of the Bill for the rest of the community? Does the Bill sensibly achieve the help for the disabled that it purports to achieve, or does it contain flaws? I shall explore those issues in more detail.

What help is already available? What do the Government already provide for the long-term sick and disabled? I suppose that one should start with the usual amount that is spent—that figure, which is always trotted out, of £16.5 billion. It is a huge figure and difficult to comprehend, except that it is up by 225 per cent. in real terms on the same period in 1979.

The Government have an excellent record of helping long-term sick and disabled people over the past 15 years. I do not want to go through the long list that I have here. Among other things, we set up extra help for special needs in education. We set up the Disablement Advisory Service. We introduced sheltered placement schemes. We have already altered the building regulations to take into account services required for the disabled.

In 1988, we required all grant-maintained schools to have facilities for children with special educational needs. We introduced the independent living fund, which enabled a large number of people to live independently. From 1989, all new licensed taxis were required to have wheelchairs so that they were accessible to disabled people. We introduced the mobility allowance, which was extended to the deaf, blind and amputees.

In the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, we imposed a duty on all local education authorities and the Further Education Funding Council to have regard to people with learning difficulties. We introduced the disability and orange badge schemes and introduced the disability and working allowances, which, among other things, extended help to 300,000 less severely disabled people and later provided a major stepping stone into employment. In 1993, we introduced the independent living fund to allow 18,000 people to live a more normal —a more independent—life.

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): Would the hon. Gentleman care to tell the House by how much in real terms individual disablement benefits have increased since 1979?

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I do not have that figure off the top of my head, but I can tell the hon. Gentleman that we are spending, as I said, about £16.5 billion on disabled people, which is up 225 per cent. in real terms on 1979. Although I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the figure in the form that he requires, the measures that I have outlined, and a few more that I will mention, prove that the Government are already sympathetic and understanding to the needs of long-term sick and disabled people.

Mr. Hendry: Can my hon. Friend confirm that, although the individual sums paid to people with disabilities have not increased dramatically, the massive increase in spending is accounted for because the Government have greatly widened the eligibility factors?

[Mr. Hendry]

We are thereby able to help many more people than was the case 15 years ago and that, in itself, is a desirable and laudable objective.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I welcome that thoughtful intervention, and my hon. Friend is right. Some of the figures that I have given show the wide spectrum of help that is available to a large number of people. It is not only the Department of Social Security that helps disabled people. As I have said, considerable help is available from the Department for Education and the Departments of Employment and of Transport, among others. Many Government Departments and agencies have a role to play in helping long-term sick and disabled people.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): To help the hon. Gentleman, whereas salaries and wages have increased in real terms by much more than 20 per cent. in the past 15 years, the real value of individual disablement benefits has increased by only 1 per cent. The words "widening gap" have been used to describe the difference in expenditure now and 15 years ago, but the real widening gap—indeed, the yawning gap—is that created by what has happened to other people and what has happened to disabled people with regard to individual incomes. Much of the increase in public spending that the hon. Gentleman referred to is caused by demographic change and by more people being entitled to benefits than before.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: The right hon. Gentleman used the words, "a yawning gap". I am not sure that I would quite concur with him on that phrase. I am sure that he would also agree with me that the needs of long-term sick and disabled people are now much better understood than they were hitherto and that it has been possible to target what resources the state is able to give them in a much more focused way. The independent living fund is an example of that, enabling 18,000 people to live a more reasonable, a more independent, life.

I am sure that the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe would agree that two things above all are necessary to give self-esteem to disabled people. The first is to be able to live independently without needing too much help from other people, and the second is to be employed. Therefore, as should be borne in mind when I discuss the part of the Bill that is concerned with employment, all of us would wish every disabled person wherever possible to be able to find a job because it gives him that self-esteem and that life fulfilment which everyone on all sides of the House wants.

To conclude my description of the help provided by the Government, the Education Bill will provide further help and the training and enterprise councils already have a duty to provide help for the disabled, and provide considerable help. The Department of Transport sponsored a trial scheme—the London dial-a-ride—and provided funds for two trials for low-floor wheelchairs on the buses in London and North Tyneside. As I shall discuss later, the Bill makes provision for providing wheelchair lifts on all public transport.

What are the implications of the Bill on the rest of the community? I intervened deliberately in the speech of the hon. Member for Kingswood because I wanted to explore those implications with him. Although we all applaud the aims of the Bill, if we are to consider it and sensibly to consider possible objections by employers' organisations, we have a duty to provide them with an idea of the costs that will be imposed on them. We live in an increasingly competitive age and it is no good providing jobs for disabled people, or anyone else, only to impose such high costs on any business that eventually it is unable to compete in the rest of the world and goes out of business. We want long-term sustainability of businesses so that we can provide the maximum amount of employment.

Although I have no objection to the principle of the Bill —as I said, I applaud it—we have to examine every aspect of the Bill carefully with employers' organisations, employees' organisations and trade unions. I take on board what has already been said this morning about the wide range of consultation, but, as a result of what I have read, I think that before the Bill reaches the statute book a great deal more consultation needs to take place.

Mr. Berry: Will the hon. Gentleman tell Members of the House how much consultation there was with businesses a couple of years ago when the Government increased interest rates to such an extent that billions of pounds of extra costs were imposed on British industry? Is that the type of consultation that the hon. Member has in mind?

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I regret that intervention because I thought that the debate had been of high quality until now. The hon. Gentleman knows well that the Government have to run a fiscal policy for the long-term benefit of the country. Whatever the rights or wrongs of imposing increased interest rates, it was obviously deemed necessary by the Government of the day to increase interest rates in the short term so that we could put the economy of the country on a sound footing. That is why we are now able to have an economy that has almost the lowest inflation, the lowest interest rates and the lowest unit wage costs in the European Community. Indeed, that is why we have the only economy in the European Community that is growing this year. It is why we have an economy in which unemployment has dropped by more than 200,000 in the past year alone. Clearly, the Government set the right fiscal framework for the country's economy, which has done a great deal of good for businesses.

As I explained earlier in my speech—if the hon. Member for Kingswood had been listening instead of intervening, he would have heard—the Bill is a long-term measure that will affect businesses. It is incumbent on the hon. Gentleman, when considering the Bill's detail, to ensure that it is right and strikes a sensible balance between the needs of the disabled and the needs of businesses. They have to keep their costs low and be able to compete with the rest of the world, as that enables them to employ even more staff—not only disabled people, but others. That is a difficult balance to strike and a difficult equation, but we need to ensure that we get it right.

The Bill sets up the Disability Rights Commission—the regulatory organisation that will police the provisions. Of course, the Bill must contain some method of policing—I do not object to that. We must consider the detail of the Bill. Paragraph 20 of the schedule deals with the powers of general investigation of the commission. I have no objection to the power of investigation into a business when it is suspected that an offence has been committed. However, a general power of investigation when there is no particular reason to suspect that an employer has committed an offence ranks alongside the sort of general

powers that Her Majesty's Customs and Excise currently have and the powers that we are about to give, under the Finance Bill, to the Inland Revenue. Businesses and individuals find such authoritarian powers offensive. I wonder whether it is necessary to include such a general power to request information when there is no suspicion of contravention of the Bill's provisions.

Mr. Austin-Walker: Does the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that the Race Relations Act 1976 gave the Commission on Racial Equality the power to carry out formal investigations even when no complaint of racial discrimination had been made? Where those formal investigations have been carried out, even where there has been no suggestion of discrimination, employers have recognised that often their procedures and practices may have discriminated indirectly. Those employers have found the formal investigations helpful in developing equal opportunity policies. Does not the hon. Gentleman feel that that would be equally true in relation to discrimination on the grounds of disability?

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I accept what the hon. Gentleman says about the parallel with the race relations legislation, but two wrongs do not necessarily make a right. There is a growing tendency to pass legislation giving organisations unnecessarily authoritarian powers. Agricultural measures give officials of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the power to enter farms without notifying the landowner or tenant. Such power should not be given to organisations to interfere, as they do increasingly, in the lives of individuals or businesses. We are a democracy and should rely on the fact that one is innocent until proved guilty. Perhaps the Bill's promoter would look at the schedule's wording. I am all in favour of policing powers and a commission with policing powers, but could not we phrase the description of that power to ensure that there must be a reasonable suspicion that an offence has been committed before the commission investigates?

Mr. Sheerman: Will the hon. Gentleman think about the use of the phrase "authoritarian powers"? My hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker) mentioned the community relations powers—the Equal Opportunities Commission has similar powers. Their powers are not authoritarian, but are usually implemented on a happy and co-operative basis. They allow an investigation of policies on, for example, recruitment and promotion. A general report is made and most companies, local authorities or whoever is being investigated make the necessary changes and approach the investigations in a co-operative and positive way. The powers are not authoritarian, and do not work as if being implemented in a police state. I think that the hon. Gentleman is raising spectres that do not exist.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I am grateful for that interesting intervention. I am in favour of the commission conducting investigations on a voluntary basis, which is a perfectly reasonable thing to do, but paragraph 20 contains virtually no qualification of that power. It is not reasonable to require information from any commercial organisation without the business or the employer being suspected of having committed an offence. I do not want to dwell on that detailed issue as it is not one of the main thrusts of the Bill, but it is nevertheless important.

While I welcome the principle that employers should not discriminate against disabled people, I believe that we must look at the details of the provision. I should like the Bill's promoter to look carefully at the clause dealing with how a business is run and the consideration that must be given to the needs of the disabled people employed in that business.

If one disabled person were employed, would that mean that the entire ethos of the business would have to be altered to accommodate that one person? If so, how could the business compete in an increasingly competitive world in which the European Community has, over the past 10 years, seen its share of world trade reduced? Those are details that need to be considered carefully before we enact the Bill. Clause 4 (2)(c) mentions the

"criteria or methods of administration that have an adverse effect on a person's opportunities".

Perhaps the hon. Member for Kingswood will explain how that provision will work in practice. I am genuinely interested.

Mr. Berry: If the hon. Gentleman supports the motion, the time will be made available for him and other hon. Members to raise just such issues on Report. If attempts are made to talk the Bill out on Report, the hon. Gentleman may never receive answers to his questions.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: In response to that intervention I must make clear the purpose of my speech. We are discussing a motion that asks for more time to debate the Bill. In considering whether to give more or less time to the Bill we must discuss its merits. I am not talking out the Bill today; I am merely mentioning one or two reservations that I have so that, before Report, other hon. Members can consider those reservations and table sensible amendments —I may want to do so. By flagging up my reservations and difficulties today, I give all hon. Members plenty of time to think about some of the Bill's weaknesses. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will accept that we all welcome and applaud the Bill's aims and aspirations, but any Bill has the ability to be improved. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take and consider some of my reservations in the genuine spirit in which I opened my speech.

The Bill proposes a commission of between eight and 15 members. It provides for a quorum of at least five, which, with a commission of only eight, is a high hurdle to have to overcome. I ask the hon. Member for Kingswood to consider that and perhaps to be a little more prescriptive. A commission of between eight and 15 allows enormous discretion. With a commission of 15 people, a quorum of five might be realistic. The commission must be properly represented, and I am sure the promoter will want to consider that. The Bill provides for the commission to have a member from England, from Wales, from Scotland and from Northern Ireland, which is a laudable aim, but one or two other bodies might be represented on the commission —for example, Save the Children, which has a large membership.

As a chartered surveyor, I am interested in clause 8, which proposes alterations to the building regulations to ensure that all new extensions and buildings take into account the needs of disabled people. Again, that is a laudable aim, but it would impose a huge cost on the construction industry when the vast majority of extensions and new houses will not be occupied by disabled people. The hon. Member for Kingswood needs to consider that aspect carefully. If there is a reasonable prospect of a

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building or extension being occupied by a disabled person, of course we would all want that person's needs to be considered, but a blanket provision for new extensions and buildings would impose a completely unnecessary cost on the construction industry, which would ultimately feed through to everybody.

Part IV covers a large number of organisations that will have to modify their buildings—hotels, schools, cinemas, ports, airports, clubs, sports grounds, council offices, telephone boxes and access to lawyers—to cater for the needs of disabled people, and all public liability and employers' insurance policies will have to take into account the increased costs caused by liabilities from disabled people.

Again, that is a laudable aim, but the lack of a realistic transitional period to allow that huge number of bodies to adapt their premises to deal with the needs of disabled people will impose a great cost on those bodies, which will be reflected in higher prices and will feed through to the general level of taxation. The hon. Member for Kingswood shakes his head, but that is the wording of the Bill. Nobody objects to such alterations, but the hon. Member must offer some realistic costings and a realistic timetable to the organisations and local authorities that would have to implement paragraphs (a) to (n) of clause 6(2).

The hon. Gentleman now points at the Minister. Perhaps the Government should make such costings, but somebody must do so before the Bill is enacted. I should add, in fairness, that clause 9 contains appropriate caveats to deal with the viability of the business and nature and costs of the actions in question. Nevertheless, it is incumbent on the promoter of the Bill to offer an estimate of costs because, for example, a body responsible for local authority buildings or schools must have some idea of the timetable proposed for new buildings, old buildings and buildings in the pipeline. These serious questions must be addressed because they involve much public money.

Clause 16 applies the Bill to all Crown servants and properties. I have already said that the Bill has huge implications for the public purse. All buildings in the public sector will have to be altered to take the needs of disabled people into account. I should not be surprised if, under the clause, some lifts in this place would have to be ripped out and replaced to make them wide enough to take a wheelchair. Perhaps there is nothing wrong with that, and I am not necessarily criticising it, but we need to have an idea of the cost and of the timetable for such alterations.

Mr. Berry: As we have specifically said that the timetable for those changes should not be set out in the Bill but should be for the Secretary of State, subject to parliamentary approval, to determine, how on earth does the hon. Gentleman think that we can respond to his specific comments? What is the alternative other than having the timetable in the hands of the Secretary of State and subject to parliamentary approval? Does not that timetable then determine the cost and is that not why no hon. Member can say specifically what the cost would be? That is not set in concrete in the Bill.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says, but I repeat—I cannot repeat often enough—that we all applaud the aims and aspirations of the Bill but if I, as a responsible Member of Parliament representing almost 90,000 constituents, am to be asked to vote for the Bill, the hon. Member for Kingswood must give some idea of its costs. I cannot responsibly vote for a Bill until I have been given guidance on the increase in the general level of taxation and in corporation tax to pay for those burdens on business. One must be given an idea of the costings. The Bill represents an open-ended cheque book.

Mr. Berry: It does not.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: It does. I am sorry to disagree with the hon. Member. I know that he does not like the tenor of my remarks, but many of the Bill's provisions, and therefore the costs that will be imposed on employers, are open ended, partly because it gives a great deal of discretion to the Secretary of State. Until we have an idea of how the Secretary of State is likely to use that discretion in practice, I cannot see how we can know what costs will be imposed on businesses.

Mr. Austin-Walker: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that much of the opposition of small businesses and transport undertakings in the United States to the American legislation was based precisely on those grounds, yet experience in the United States disproves and discounts all those fears?

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says. The Americans may become less competitive compared with emerging parts of the world. That is all very well as long as we accept the costs that the Bill would impose on businesses and the community at large and its probable implications for employment and our constituents understand that income tax would have to go up by several pence in the pound.

As I said, we applaud the aims of the Bill but, before we put it on the statute book, it is our responsibility to ascertain the costs involved. It may well be that the Secretary of State should provide details of the costs but, certainly, someone needs to do so, and rapidly, if, as the hon. Member for Kingswood wishes, it is to be passed before the summer. In any event, someone has a great deal of work to do.

It is all very well for the hon. Gentleman to keep shaking his head—I know that he dislikes the tenor of my speech—but he must co-operate with the Secretary of State because he knows the Bill's background, having been involved in its drafting. Before Report, it is incumbent on the hon. Gentleman to consult the Secretary of State to ensure that the House is provided with the information that it requires.

On behalf of my disabled constituents, I welcome the thrust of the Bill. It is right that we find out where discrimination against disabled people occurs. I cannot stress too highly the fact that I am grateful to have so far enjoyed good health. I meet disabled constituents and I am sympathetic to their needs. I am always prepared to help them obtain every benefit that the Government provide; and, as I have already explained, the Government provide a wide range of such benefits.

Some of the Bill's aims are extremely laudable, but I hope that the hon. Member for Kingswood will take into account some of my remarks and will provide the information that the House requires. I also hope that he will examine some of the Bill's weaknesses. I do not have time this morning to deal with all of them but I should be delighted to go through them in detail with the hon.

Gentleman to see whether I can spot more loopholes and to discover whether some of my fears could be allayed by the tabling of appropriate amendments on Report. The Bill that ends up on the statute book needs to be effective and needs to achieve the aims for which we all strive on behalf of our disabled constituents, of whom there are an average of 10,000 in a typical constituency.

I welcome the hon. Gentleman's efforts in trying to achieve legislation whose aim is to oppose discrimination against disabled people.

11.52 pm

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): I welcome the motion and am pleased to support it on behalf of the Liberal Democrats. We are keen to extend the rights of all citizens and enshrine them in law in a way that, unfortunately, the Government's toothless charters are unable to do. Disabled people do not want only charters; they want and deserve civil rights, and they want them enshrined in law. That is something that only the House can do, yet the House epitomises the very discrimination that the Bill aims to outlaw.

How many Members of Parliament are disabled? There are more than 6 million disabled people in Britain, accounting for more than 10 per cent. of the population. Obviously, 10 per cent. of Members of Parliament are not disabled, and it is hard to believe that disabled people's under-representation here, as in so many walks of life, does not have a great deal to do with the institutionalised discrimination that disabled people suffer.

Being under-represented means that the disabled people of Britain can do no more than depend on us to guard their interests. It is a responsibility which I feel keenly, and which I hope to honour. I only wish that the Government were able to feel that responsibility in the same way. I know that many Conservative Back Benchers do, and I wish that the Government would follow their lead.

If the Government had been able to feel that responsibility, we should not be here this morning, debating this excellent motion tabled by the hon. Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam), which calls on the Government to give the Bill Government time.

Report and Third Reading have been allotted second place on Friday 6 May. As we all know, that gives the Government every opportunity to talk out a Bill which we know only too well they oppose in principle. The Government were perfectly happy to do the same thing last Friday, when they chose to talk out the Energy Conservation Bill introduced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). Among other things, that Bill would have provided money for the insulation of the homes of the elderly and the disabled to cushion them against the iniquitous imposition of value added tax on fuel. This Bill is also far too important to be treated in that way.

I deplore the Government's instincts which seem to be to sabotage Bills that they do not support. Whether or not they support this Bill, I ask them to consider whether it is proper not to dedicate sufficient time to it. As I said, the disabled people of Britain are relying on us to look after their interests.

People who are disabled are so called not only because they are confined to a wheelchair or are blind; what disables them is the fact that they cannot get access to buildings, that written material is not available in braille, that work is denied them because the workplace cannot accommodate a particular disability, or that an employer is prejudiced against disabled people. The list is endless, and its existence is an indictment of us all. It amounts to discrimination that would be wholly unacceptable if it were targeted against women or ethnic minorities.

If a group of black people was told by the owners of a holiday camp that they could not book a holiday at his establishment because they would upset other guests, there would, quite rightly, be a national outcry and a prosecution. However, it is allowed if the group consists of people with cerebral palsy. Indeed, it recently happened.

If a woman were refused a job because the employer could not be bothered to install changing facilities suitable for her, there would also be a national outcry and a prosecution, but if the applicant were in a wheelchair or had controlled epilepsy, that employer would be within his or her rights to put the application straight into the bin without a second thought. That has also happened.

The Government have faced private Members' Bills seeking civil rights for disabled people several times in recent years. Such Bills have had cross-party support. The last time this Bill was debated, it received support from members of all parties and a total of 231 hon. Members voted in favour. Not one hon. Member voted against it, but, whenever such a Bill has come before the House, the Government have taken effective steps to block it and have argued that legislation in this context would create too much red tape and would be too expensive. They seem incredible reasons for resisting the claim of more than 6 million people, who are seeking only the rights enjoyed by the rest of the population.

In the country at large, people understand that everyone is part of society, and that, if any members of that society are grossly disadvantaged, the whole of society suffers. If the Government can justify their arguments against giving disabled people rights that most of the rest of us take for granted, let them make their case in a proper debate, and let the House and the country judge their efforts.

If the Government do not give sufficient time for the Bill to complete all its stages, there is only one conclusion that the country can draw—that the Government are frightened, that their arguments could not convince the House, and that they would scandalise the country.

The Bill will be implemented if the House is allowed to vote on the issue. I am certain that right hon. and hon. Members could not in all conscience vote against a Bill whose whole purpose is to make it possible for disabled people to take their rightful place in society from which they are at present in so many ways excluded.

The Government should have the courage to prove me wrong. All I ask is that they should accept that the Bill is extremely important, not only to disabled people, who are directly affected, but to the moral health of the nation. Today and every day, until the Bill is enacted, disabled people will be discriminated against in a way that should be utterly unacceptable. I urge all hon. Members to support the Bill.

12 noon

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I recognise and understand the reasons why my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) tabled the motion. Having taken a private Member's Bill, fortunately successfully, through the House a few years ago, I recognise that any successful

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attempt needs adequate parliamentary time. I believe that such a sensitive and important issue should be properly debated in the House and that proper time should be given to it.

I recognise that it is within the power and remit of individual Members of Parliament to talk out a Bill. I have just been talking in the Tea Room with an hon. Member who, single-handedly, talked out a Bill that we all thought was a good thing at the time. I hope that, if this Bill is not successful, the Government will draw up, following the kind of consultation that I shall mention later, their own proposals effectively to outlaw discrimination against people with disabilities.

Although I have reservations about the Bill—my hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) spoke about many aspects that cause me to pause—I believe that there is a need to ensure that the rights of disabled people are underpinned by legislation. I say that not only because I am secretary of the parliamentary human rights group, but because I see so many practical ways in which disabled people are discriminated against.

I also believe that, by strengthening the rights of a particular, possibly vulnerable, group in society, one underpins the rights of everyone in that society. On those grounds, I hope that the Government will take a constructive view, irrespective of the Bill's fate.

Equally, I recognise that the present position, although perhaps not as dire as some make out, is not acceptable. On 11 March, a number of constituents came to the House to talk to me. I was frankly horrified by what they told me about the ways in which disabled people, especially wheelchair-bound disabled people—although not exclusively such people—were denied access to places that the vast majority of the rest of us would regard as a God-given right. I refer to places such as cinemas, public halls, from which, as the hon. Member for Exeter said on Second Reading, subnormal people were banned, and restaurants. Such behaviour is totally unacceptable, irrespective of the exclusions from employment which, sadly, so many disabled people have to suffer.

I mention in this regard the totally reprehensible activities of Hereford and Worcester county council, which is now controlled by a coalition of Labour and Liberal Democrats. The council has decided recently, not as a cost-cutting measure as it claims in public—in private, the council admits differently—to take away the "wages" of disabled people who attend a social education centre in my constituency.

For many years, they have been used to receiving such wages as a reward for their work, and to get them used to getting back into the wider world of employment. That is cutting off one's nose to spite one's face with a vengeance. It is entirely vindictive. I take this opportunity of a public platform to urge the county council to ensure that its actions match its rhetoric in favour of disabled people by reinstating those appalling cuts.

I remind the House of the wise words of my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) on Second Reading. This matter is not purely one of human rights; it is one way to alleviate natural hardships. It is not wrong to say that, although the vast majority of disabled people are as cheerful as anyone in the House, they inevitably suffer as a result of their disabilities.

My hon. Friend said that disabled people were resilient in the extreme. He then said that they accepted their responsibilities as disabled persons every minute of every day of every week of every year. Parliament should try to construct a framework that allows disabled people to overcome the difficulties and to fulfil those responsibilities themselves rather than have other people do it for them.

There is nothing worse for any disabled person—this happens too often socially—than to be condescended to, and to be talked to as though he or she had mental problems because he or she is in a wheelchair. Sadly, however well-meaning, too many people do that.

The need for legislation has been clearly made out, but I am not sure that the Bill is the appropriate way to legislate. I have been slightly struck by the somewhat Jesuitical tone of the debate. When someone raises a perfectly valid objection to the Bill, it is said that one has a down on the disabled, that one does not want to help them, and that one does not want any legislation for them. Such political correctness is not conducive to the rational debate that is needed to ensure that any legislation is effective, is not counter-productive and helps disabled people in the way that we desire.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Does my hon. Friend accept that, in taking our job as Members of Parliament seriously, we have a duty to point out the flaws in legislation? That does not mean that we are in favour of discrimination for the disabled. We are just doing our duty as Members of Parliament.

Mr. Coombs: I agree. Although I cannot remember the exact words, I refer my hon. Friend to the words of Edmund Burke. He said that we owe our constituents our judgment as much as the judgment of their interests, and that we should betray them if we acted otherwise. My hon. Friend has made a valuable point.

Mr. Fabricant: Will not my hon. Friend concede that, while pointing out the costs or disbenefits of any legislation, one should also point out the benefits? Just as there may be costs, albeit staggered over an indefinite period, as a result of the Bill, there will also be benefits. A substantial proportion of the 6.25 million disabled people will be able to come off state benefit and to start earning money, while doing a useful job which will help their self-esteem. Heaven forbid, they may even pay Inland Revenue taxation into the nation's coffers.

Mr. Coombs: I agree with my hon. Friend. I never said that rational debate should preclude balanced debate. It is very important that that point is made. Equally, however, we are entitled to ask whether the legislation will target precisely the people that we think ought to be targeted.

Something that is slightly difficult to question in a somewhat politically correct, intellectual climate is the definition of "disabled". It seems slightly curious that, when every other level of health indicator in the country, including life expectancy and infant mortality, indicates that the general health of the population is rising, those people who are eligible to be regarded as disabled also goes on rising.

Although we talk of 6.5 million people and 10,000 people for every constituency, I would need to look

slightly askance at that. It is significant that, over the past 15 years, the number of disabled people who have been helped with care and mobility needs by the Government has risen from 360,000 to no less than 2 million.

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): While recognising that the health of the nation is improving, we also have to consider the statistics that show that many people, especially young people, who become disabled, often through motor cycle or car accidents, were fit and healthy until that moment of impact. Obviously, there has been a huge increase in those numbers, because, with medical technology and care, many people survive today who, perhaps even a decade ago, would not have survived in the community.

Mr. Coombs: That is a reasonable point. On the other hand, my motor cycle action group tell me that accident statistics are also falling, so the number of people involved in an accident in the first place is also being reduced.

Sir John Hannam: On that point, would my hon. Friend accept that most of the increases in the number of disabled people receiving benefits have come about because of the identification of people with handicaps? Until recent years, many disabled people in our society were completely hidden and not identifiable. It is because of successive Acts of Parliament—notably the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act promoted back in 1969-70 by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris)—that identification of disabled people has resulted in them receiving benefits.

Mr. Coombs: I accept that; obviously, in a more sophisticated society, that will be an inevitable process. However, it is very important that we only identify as disabled those who are—I know it is a moveable feast—genuinely disabled. One thing that has caused some concern among my constituents is the orange badge scheme, which for too many people, moved away from what was originally intended, was more widely spread and, possibly, was abused by some people. I do not think that that does the cause of disabled people generally any good whatever.

Mr. Alfred Morris: As the author of the orange badge scheme, may I tell the hon. Gentleman that there are penalties available to us for any abuse of the scheme? Originally, there was a gross under-reckoning of the number of people who would be entitled to that kind of mobility help. We could tell that because the Department of Transport did not ever believe that more than a million people could legitimately claim an orange badge.

However, I ask the hon. Gentleman not to devalue the importance of the scheme, which can make all the difference between getting off the pavement and on to the road for severely disabled people. I know that he is not intending to do that, but I hope that he will emphasise to local authorities and others that there are penalties available to deal with abuse.

Mr. Coombs: Of course I would not want to devalue a scheme which many in my constituency value and have found very useful. The point that I am making is that we must ensure that our resources are accurately targeted, and that we do not undermine the work that we are trying to do for the disabled by allowing people to take advantage of the scheme. I am not saying that that is happening in a wide context, but it should be borne in mind.

It is also important, when one has a rational discussion, to try to analyse the fate of disabled people over the past few years and decide whether legislation is likely to improve that outlook. I happen to believe that discrimination anywhere in the world is best eliminated ultimately by changes in attitude, which may or may not be prompted by changes in legislation as much as by anything else.

One of the reasons, I think, why, fortunately, for the vast majority of the population—although not in certain parts of London—racial discrimination is on the decline is that people are seeing how futile it is, and are gradually recognising the enormous contribution that ethnic minorities have to offer society. I recognise that, as Martin Luther King said,

"Judicial decrees may not change the heart, but they can restrain the heartless."

Therefore, I also understand that anybody who is minded to act in a grossly discriminatory way against disabled people may well pause if legislation is available. That is why I am agreeing on the need for legislation, but it is the kind of legislation proposed with which I may have some argument.

One does not want to put the record over the past 15 years in political terms, as it is not necessarily the record of the Government. There are so many other organisations involved in looking after the disabled that to do so would be wrong, but it has been a record of a gradual improvement in services available for the disabled. Indeed, on Second Reading, my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter talked about "dramatically improved financial support" for the disabled. Certainly, in terms of the taxpayer, a threefold increase in real terms over the past 15 years in the amount of money spent on the long-term sick and disabled speaks for itself.

Recent initiatives, such as the disability living allowance and, especially, the invalid care allowance, which helps 200,000 carers who look after people with disabilities, are important. I was pleased to hear the Minister talk of the success of the Employment Service in getting disabled people into the kind of jobs that we want to see them in and where they ought to be. PACTs—placing, assessment and counselling teams—in the Employment Service have had an important role to play in that area.

In transport, it is good to see that, gradually, British Rail, the taxi service and the buses are all waking up to the idea that provision must be made for people who are disabled, especially those in wheelchairs. I pay tribute in my constituency to Dial-A-Ride, which does a first-class job. I know that there has been a significant increase in the Government grant to Dial-A-Ride in London over the past 15 years. However, my local service does a first-class job in ensuring that disabled people are mobile, where otherwise they would not be. I understand that Dial-A-Ride in my area has two minibuses to do that important work, although—again, a little advertisement—it is short of drivers, and I am sure that any volunteers would be gratefully received.

There has been a huge upsurge in investment through the health service. I shall not go into that, except to say that the number of occupational therapists has risen exponentially by about 76 per cent. The number of speech

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and language therapists, although far too thin on the ground—I have an especial problem in my constituency—has also risen by about 57 per cent. in 15 years. Other approaches to disability, such as the Steiner method and conductive education, in which I have an especial interest, have received Government support over the past few years in an imaginative way.

Also, in my constituency and elsewhere, there has been an upsurge in the work of voluntary organisations, such as Open Sesame and Citizens Advocacy and, in co-ordinating the activities of voluntary organisations, DIAL, the disabled information line in my constituency, has been important in guiding people and as a gateway to solving problems.

I have gone into that at some length because the general provision for disabled people in Britain has dramatically improved over the past 15 years, and that ought to be recognised when dealing with such legislation.

On Second Reading, the hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry) acknowledged that one of the counter arguments is that the Bill might be too costly or unworkable in practice. Cost is, of course, important. On Second Reading, my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter quoted a Dr. Stephen Duckworth, who is disabled and who has done much work on behalf of the disabled. Dr. Duckworth acknowledges that concerns over litigation, bureaucracy and unquantifiable costs for business and taxpayers are important and cannot be shrugged off.

If we are to rely upon business to implement many of the measures that will make the proposed legislation workable and practicable, it is incumbent upon us to ensure that anyone who introduces a Bill of this sort has the support of business as far as that is possible.

We talked earlier about prior consultation, and I recognise what the hon. Member for Kingswood said about the difficulty of engaging in it. I know from my own experience that it is difficult to consult when we do not know where we shall find ourselves following the ballot for private Members' Bills.

It is crucial, however, that, before legislation is introduced and implemented, an appropriate cost-benefit analysis of the sort mentioned in Committee by my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) be undertaken by the Government or some outside organisation. I hope that the Government will get on with that work as quickly as possible. Without that sort of study it is difficult to analyse the financial consequences of the Bill.

I recognise that there is a power of exemption for the building and facilities measures that are set out in the Bill, and that the concepts of undue hardship and reasonableness are introduced. I am slightly concerned that, because there is a relationship to the financial resources of those who are required to implement these measures, there may be an element of inconsistency, and therefore arbitrariness. It is possible that there will be discrimination against shops, for example, that are required to make their premises available to disabled people.

In about two months' time—I have done this in the past—I shall be involved in a walkabout in the three major towns in my constituency with Open Sesame, which basically is a group that works for the disabled. We take someone round the towns who is in a wheelchair and observe the sort of problems that he or she faces—with pavements, for example, or access to shops. Another example is access to a bank counter.

If some shops are required by virtue of their financial standing to carry out improvements for the disabled, and next door to them is a shopkeeper who is not required so to do—he may be a one-man band—that might well introduce arbitrariness. That will not be healthy, and it is something that should be considered.

Sir John Hannam: May I remind my hon. Friend of the American experience? When businesses realised that there was a potential but untapped new business sector of 49 million disabled people—there are 6.5 million in this country—and when business men saw the shop down the road adapted, or the hotel, to accommodate the new potential business, they jolly soon followed suit. They thought that it was a sound investment to make.

Mr. Coombs: That may be a benign effect of the Bill. Whether that effect will become immediately apparent is another matter. We should be aware of inconsistencies that could result if we were not to consider these matters in some detail.

Mr. Fabricant: My hon. Friend talked earlier of the county council that has control in his constituency. He said that it had not been that helpful towards the disabled. Does he agree that, when local shops—that was his example—or county councils provide facilities for the disabled, they are properly thought out?

With your indulgence, Madam Deputy Speaker, I shall briefly give an example of a facility that was made available by Staffordshire county council. At great expense to the council tax payer, it provided a ramp leading up and into county hall. It also provided electrically operated glass doors, which would open automatically to enable disabled people to gain access to the premises. Unfortunately, the doors opened outwards, not inwards. They would hit the wheelchair and shoot the disabled person back down the ramp. The initial installation cost a fortune, and its correction cost almost as much again.

Mr. Coombs: That example shows how careful we must be to ensure that appropriate adaptations are made for disabled people. That means that there must be co-ordination between private and public bodies.

I have grave doubts about whether it is necessary to have a Disability Rights Commission. The hair on my head tends to stand up when I read the powers that are proposed for the commission. Clause 3(2)(b) refers to powers of general investigation to determine whether compliance is adequate when set against the requirements of the Bill.

I do not know what the likely financial cost will be of helping people to take their cases to court or industrial tribunals. I am appalled by the idea—it is argued that the Bill does not have any element of positive discrimination—that a necessary qualification for membership of the commission should be positively discriminatory in itself. I refer to the requirement that three quarters of the members of the commission should themselves be disabled. The idea that those who are not disabled cannot have some empathy—obviously there must be some disabled people on the commission—with the problems of disabled people is possibly insulting.

I understand that, in the United States, the rights of disabled people, if they are overturned, as it were, by

legislation, are pursued by individual Government Departments. That seems to be not a bad approach, so long as there is access to the courts and employment tribunals. I do not believe that the commission is necessary. We were talking earlier about being Jesuitical; the potential of the DRC, as it no doubt will become known in this age of acronyms, is horrendous.

Paragraphs (a) and (c) of clause 2 have been drawn extremely wide in terms of discrimination. I am concerned that employers may so construct their recruitment procedures to make it more rather than less difficult to get jobs, precisely because they are terrified of being accused of prejudice—when disabled people come forward for jobs alongside able-bodied people—if for good reasons they choose able-bodied applicants rather than disabled ones. There may well be a fall in the number of places available for disabled people, rather than the reverse which the Bill expects.

Again on employment rights, clause 4(4) refers to making "reasonable accommodation" for disabled people. Clause 4(4)(a) refers to

"making existing facilities used by employees readily accessible to and useable by persons with disabilities"—

and we would all agree with that. Clause 4(4)(b) refers to

"job restructuring, instituting part-time or modified work schedules".

The DRC, or employment tribunals which look at the matter in a particularly perverse way, may not interpret that type of job restructuring as applying just to disabled people. It may well be necessary for a factory manager to make substantial changes to the work scheduling of his whole company to accommodate the needs of only one or two disabled people.

If that were to happen, it would massively increase costs for industry, would be very disruptive and would ultimately be detrimental to the economic growth which is absolutely vital to ensure that we have resources available for disabled people in the first place. The Bill's sponsors should discuss that point in detail with representatives of industry, and in particular with organisations such as the Engineering Employers Federation.

I make my final point not as a chartered surveyor, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury did, but as someone who has been involved in the building trade for 22 years. I am very concerned about clause 8, which refers to new constructions and the need to

"design and construct new buildings, extensions . . . in such a manner that they are readily accessible to, and useable by, disabled people".

In one sense—peace and motherhood—we cannot disagree with that. However, how far will that be taken?

I am aware that there is a test of reasonableness, but the DRC or particularly unsympathetic building inspectors may say, "Given that you are Wimpey or Tarmac and a relatively large company with the necessary resources, why shouldn't you make every house on the site readymade for a disabled person to move into?" Those adaptations would involve considerable cost and would necessitate wider doors, wheelchair access to stairs and so on. I believe that such a demand would be retrograde. It would raise construction costs considerably, and would therefore be counter-productive in the long term for disabled people.

Although there is no doubt that there is a need for legislation to protect the interests of disabled people and to ensure that the quite abhorrent practice of discriminating against them unnecessarily is outlawed in this country, I am not convinced that the Bill is the right way to achieve it.

Most of all, I impress on the sponsors and the Government that, as my former boss, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), used to say when he was taking Bills through the House, "The devil is in the detail." Unless we consider the costs and benefits in detail, unless we consult the people who will be required to implement the measures, we may well end up with legislation which is not only unworkable and very costly, but which does not do what we want it to do, which is to end discrimination against disabled people.

12.32 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): The House will not be surprised to learn that I most warmly welcome this debate and as warmly congratulate the hon. Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) both on his good fortune in the ballot and on his unhesitating choice of motion. This is not by any means the first time that we have sung from the same hymn sheet. For more than 20 years now, we have acted in the closest rapport in seeking to make life better for Britain's 6.5 million people with disabilities and their families.

Never in all that time has the hon. Member for Exeter faltered in conferring on disabled people whatever luck he has had in ballots for private Members' Bills and motions. Without exception, the organisations of and for disabled people are also most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for this opportunity to emphasise again to the Government the very urgent need now to enact a Bill which Stephen Bradshaw, the director of the Spinal Injuries Association, who also chairs Voluntary Organisations for Anti-Discrimination Legislation—VOADL—describes as the most important legislation this century on disabled people's rights.

It will be recalled that when I first drafted and asked the House to give the Bill a Second Reading on 31 January 1992, the Government's attitude was said to be one of "benevolent neutrality". I quote the words of the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People in an interview he gave the BBC "You and Yours" programme the day before the debate. With only one exception, all who spoke in the debate gave the Bill's principles their support. The exception was the former Member for Kingswood, who talked the Bill out, having first said that he would not do so. He subsequently made a personal statement of "unreserved apologies" to Mr. Speaker Weatherill and the House as a whole for misleading us in his speech on the Bill.

Nevertheless, the Bill's chance of enactment had been destroyed and disabled people all over Britain felt cheated by what had happened. My noble Friend Lady Lockwood later introduced the Bill for me in the House of Lords where it completed all its stages. Its provisions were also endorsed by this House when it approved a motion that was moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) on 26 February 1993.

To keep up the momentum created by the approval of that motion, versions of the Bill specifically to benefit disabled people in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were then introduced by my hon. Friends the Members for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) and for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), and by the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth). All three Bills had overwhelming

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all-party support. Some 90 per cent. of Scottish and Welsh Members of Parliament wanted the benefits of the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill for the disabled people they represent from the only Parliament that can legislate for them.

In the case of Northern Ireland—a parliamentary first if ever there was one—all 17 of its Members of Parliament backed the Bill; but their Bill, like those for Scotland and Wales, was blocked by Government Whips entirely without debate. As the Minister knows, the intervention of the Whips to block legislation about which he had said he was "benevolently neutral" provoked expressions not only of anguish but of despair from disabled people all over Britain. They were in despair not least because it now appeared that even the support of a majority in this House and the Bill's successful passage through the House of Lords, where not a single vote was cast against it at any stage, meant nothing to the minority in this House who were determined to use any and every procedural ploy to block the Bill. The treatment of the Bill at Second Reading on 31 January 1992, and the antics of Government Whips Friday after Friday, were described by one of the most respected disabled people in Britain as "a nauseating farce" and as

"a disgrace to parliamentary democracy".

Then came some good news when my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry) won a high place in this Session's ballot for private Members' Bills. It was my hon. Friend whose early-day motion had demonstrated that there is a clear parliamentary majority for the Bill in this House and I had no hesitation in asking him to promote the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill in this Session. There could not have been a better choice and I am most grateful to him for having secured both a Second Reading for the Bill and a successful conclusion to its Committee stage, during which every opportunity was given to Ministers —and everyone else with an interest in its provisions—to table any amendments they wanted to see made.

My hon. Friend has shown himself strong in regard to principle and flexible about detail. In addition to accepting amendments to the Bill proposed in Committee, he will be tabling amendments of his own at Report to meet every constructive point raised with him upstairs.

Among the amendments to the Bill accepted in Committee, none was more important than those about giving deaf and hard of hearing people equal access to technical communications. That is something the rest of us take for granted, as a civil right, but a deaf person cannot get the same ease of access to the public telephone system as a hearing person.

Equal access to justice for deaf and hard of hearing people was also dealt with by amending the Bill in Committee. Such access must no longer be a privilege for hearing people only. It is a civil right, but as of now deaf people could face a police interview without adequate communication support and could quite easily be exposed to gross miscarriages of justice.

There was no dissent from that in Committee and, if the Bill achieves nothing else, its enactment will be more than justified by what it can achieve for deaf and hard of hearing people. Tim Sargeant of the Royal National Institute for Deaf People and Jane Oberman of Deaf Accord worked long and hard to inform parliamentary opinion of the importance of the amendments approved in Committee and we should all be most grateful to them.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood said in Committee, and repeated today, his door was not only wide open to suggestions for amending the Bill there, but was virtually off its hinges. No promoter of a Bill could possibly have been more reasonable and responsive in his approach to suggestions for improving its provisions. My hon. Friend has been, and is now, as ready to discuss reservations about the Bill raised by the Institute of Directors as he is to listen to any other organisation or individual with an interest in the Bill.

The institute is said still to be concerned about some of the Bill's provisions, but I cannot believe that company directors in this country are less capable of coping with civil rights legislation for disabled people than their counterparts in the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, France and Sweden. Employers in all those countries are already implementing legislation with the same purpose and, in many cases, the same provisions as those of this Bill.

There is no evidence of whingeing among them, and indeed the response of employers in the United States has proved wholly worthy of the challenge made to them by President Bush when he signed the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990. He said:

"You can now unlock a splendid resource of untapped human potential that will enrich us all".

That there remains a huge untapped human potential here in Britain is utterly beyond dispute. Nor is it wholly the fault of employers in the private sector, although official studies show that employers there are six times more likely to turn down a disabled person for an interview even if her or his qualifications are identical to those of a non-disabled applicant. That statistic shouts the word "discrimination" and many thousands of employers openly state that, whatever the qualifications of disabled job seekers, they will never interview them.

What of the public sector? A recent report shows that 100,000 more disabled people would obtain jobs if public sector employers were to achieve the 3 per cent. employment quota established by the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1994. Only 0.7 per cent. of employees in the public sector are disabled people and, in many Departments of state, the percentage is very much lower. The Home Office employs only 0.3 per cent., or one tenth, of the 3 per cent. quota; while, according to the latest figures I have seen, not one disabled person is employed at 10 Downing street.

I most strongly appeal to employers in the public and private sectors alike to recognise the abilities of disabled people and what they have to contribute to industry and society. They seek not the dependence of social security benefits, but the dignity of becoming taxpayers. They crave the right to be judged on their merits and the freedom to compete on fair terms with everyone else. They do not want privilege, but simply to be treated like other people when it comes to jobs, enjoying their leisure and living their lives as they want to do.

They do not argue for blind bus drivers or deaf piano tuners; nor do they believe that all acts of discrimination can be ended overnight. It is unfair discrimination that they want to see eliminated and they accept that it will take time for this Bill to achieve its full purpose. They point out, as does the chief executive of the Royal National Institute for

Deaf People in his letter to all Members of Parliament earlier this week, that the Bill as now drafted provides for full consultation with employers before regulations are made by the Secretary of State and that it protects individual employers against regulations that would inflict "undue hardship" or that fails in any particular case "the test of reasonableness" provided for in the Bill.

I have had, of course, a national correspondence about this Bill ever since moving its Second Reading on 31 January 1992 and could quote cases galore of blatantly unfair discrimination against disabled people. All of them underline the importance of this motion. I shall refer here, however, to only three such cases.

The first is that of a physically disabled young man with a brilliant degree who was told by his employer that, because he was disabled, he would be paid less than other new employees for doing exactly the same work. The second case is that of a woman appointed to a senior civilian post with a major police authority who, because of her disability but with no justification on grounds of special risk, was refused entry to its pension scheme. My third case is that of a young graduate who became hearing-impaired by meningitis after a serious road accident when she was seven. Specialising in accountancy, she won the top degree of her year at Manchester university when she was 21, but the only job she had for more than two years afterwards was a temporary one at the check-out counter in a local store during the Christmas period. Her hearing aid enables her to use a telephone and to work normally, but she was rejected again and again by accountancy firms in favour of other applicants, some of them her contemporaries at university, whose qualifications were much inferior to her own. She told me in a letter:

"To mention you are disabled makes it virtually certain that you will not even be interviewed for a job".

How can any employer, or anyone else, possibly sanction that kind of discrimination against a disabled young woman who simply wants the same opportunities as everyone else to earn her own living?

Speaking in September 1991, shortly before I published the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, the Prime Minister said:

"I believe deeply that all men and women should be able to go as far as talent, ambition and effort can take them. There should be no barriers . . . I want a society that encourages each and everyone to fulfil his or her potential to the utmost."

How, then, can he possibly justify the tactics of obstruction that have been used against the Bill, more particularly by Whips acting officially as members of his Government? Has he seen *The Sun*'s description of his Government's tactics as "chicanery" and the very strong support for the Bill elsewhere in the press? Ought he not now either to withdraw what he said in September 1991 or stop obstructing this Bill? If he meant what he said then, he must surely welcome today's motion and hasten the Bill's progress to the statute book.

The right hon. Gentleman must also accept the justice of what Lord Renton, his predecessor as Conservative Member of Parliament for Huntingdon and a distinguished lawyer, told the House of Lords when speaking in the Third Reading debate on the Bill there on 4 November 1992. I do not quote the noble Lord in direct speech, of course, Madam Deputy Speaker, but what he said was that he found it extraordinary and not very creditable that legislation to outlaw discrimination against disabled people had not already been enacted. He went on to say that, after all the thought given to the Bill in the House of Lords, he did not believe many hours of discussion would be necessary in the Commons. Yet the principles of the Bill have now been debated for more than 15 hours on the Floor of this House and its details for very many hours more in Committee. Are not Lord Renton's words the most compelling case of all for approving the motion today and enacting the Bill without further delay?

At an hour-long meeting with the Prime Minister, he told me that cost was the first of three reasons for his reservations about the Bill. While he readily accepted that unfair discrimination against disabled people was "a very real problem", he said that any action to tackle it must be "without cost implications". In other words, we can afford civil rights for everyone else in this country, but not for disabled people. They and their organisations find this deeply offensive. They point out that there was no mention of any cost factor in the Prime Minister's declaration of his belief in equal opportunities for all in September 1991. That declaration was as unambiguous as it was widely circulated.

The Prime Minister's second criticism of the Bill when we met was that it does not

"sit comfortably with the Government's policy on deregulation".

But nor does the legislation on gender and race, and that criticism is an implied threat to the continued existence of the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Commission for Racial Equality.

The third criticism put to me by the Prime Minister was that the Bill takes "too comprehensive" an approach to the problem. His preference was for "piecemeal change". But discrimination against disabled people cannot be solved ad hoc. As one employer told me recently:

"To end discrimination in the workplace, you must not only protect disabled people there but also achieve for them equality of access to training and transport among many other facilities and services."

In the employer's view, "piecemeal change" would be an attempt to try to divide the indivisible and a total waste of time and money.

What is very sad is that Britain used to lead the world in legislating to make life better for disabled people. That is why, when I was the Minister in the late 1970s, I was invited to chair the World Planning Group to draft the "Charter for the 1980s" for disabled people worldwide. Now we lag behind many other countries. They have seen that today there is no more important issue for disabled people than that of civil rights; and, indeed, that fully assured civil rights are now the defining principle of all enlightened policy making on disability. They have demonstrated by the legislation that their Parliaments have enacted that what we are discussing in this debate is not an idea whose time has come, but one whose time came, as my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood said, when the Committee on Restrictions Against Disabled People, CORAD, so ably chaired by Sir Peter Large, reported to the Government in favour of legislation to end unfair discrimination against disabled people in 1982, since when one Minister after another has refused to implement the report.

It was made very clear when I appointed CORAD in 1979 that it was the then Labour Government's firm intention to act on its report; but it is in other countries, not here in Britain, that the report has so far had its main effect. There, the report was read by Ministers who were prepared to act; but at least we can take some pride in the fact that

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it was in this country that the case for legally protecting disabled people against unfair discrimination was first fully documented in an official report.

The Government may wish to argue that for the House to approve this motion would be to act without precedent. But, as we have heard today, not least from the hon. Member for Exeter, that is not the case. In fact, time was found by the then Government, with full co-operation from the Conservative Opposition, for my Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Bill to reach the statute book on 29 May 1970. My Bill could not possibly have become law before the dissolution on that date without extra time being given by the Government for its final stages. That ought surely to be a good enough precedent for approving this motion, which is, after all, about a Bill which might be described as a lineal descendant of the 1970 Act.

What this motion is basically about is keeping faith with disabled people and restoring their faith, and that of all who work to help them, in this House of Commons. If they are sceptical about the parliamentary process, even sometimes now a little cynical, we need look no further for the cause than the treatment of the Bill that this motion seeks to enact by a minority in the House who have been opposed not only to its enactment, but sometimes even to discussing the Bill.

The tide, however, is rapidly turning against those who think that the law has no part to play in achieving social equality and full citizenship for disabled people. The question now is not whether Britain will go with the tide, but whether we shall be the last country in the developed world to do so.

I am reminded again today of the striking and very memorable photograph of two baby girls that was widely displayed by the Spastics Society with the movingly eloquent caption:

"One of them has cerebral palsy, the other will grow up with full human rights."

The Spastics Society knows, like all supporters of the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, that without full civil rights disabled people are doubly disabled. The handicapping effects of their disabilities are made even harder to bear by unnecessary social handicaps for which there is no moral justification; and what anyone in this House opposed to this motion must answer today is the question: "Why on earth should what is morally unjustified any longer be legally permissible in Britain?"

12.57 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I add my voice in support of the motion before the House and congratulate the hon. Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) on bringing forward the motion. I am happy to follow the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), whose voice has often been heard arguing with persistence for those who need help.

Two things distinguish a democracy—the Parliament of that democracy as the sounding board and representative of the people, and the willingness of the Government to listen when there is a need in society. Everyone acknowledges that there is a need for the Bill. I have heard no one in the House argue against that, today or on Second Reading. We all know that there is a need. We all know also that a firm majority of Members of Parliament want the Bill to be enacted.

There will always be people who bring extraneous matters into debate and there will always be people who have doubts about the way in which legislation would be carried out. However, the need has been firmly established. We are not arguing that there has not been advance, but are we to tell people who are in need in that respect, "As some advance has been made in the past, we shall not go further and establish your full rights."?

Coming from Northern Ireland, I am surprised at the Government's attitude. In Northern Ireland, the Government were prepared to set up a commission and take action in law to try to get rid of discrimination in employment. There was a big debate in Northern Ireland about the way in which the Government set about doing that. Today, it has been established beyond all dispute that we need legislation and that a majority of Parliament wants the legislation to reach the statute book.

I want to stress what is happening in Northern Ireland —I am glad that the Bill states that it will apply to Northern Ireland. A former mayoress of the city of Belfast has a disabled child. She recently went to pay her rate bill and when she reached the door of the place where she had to pay she was told that she could not bring in her child in a wheelchair but would have to carry her child. When she entered the building, she was told that the rates office was up two flights of stairs on the second floor. She asked whether there was a lift and was told that there was not and that she would have to walk up the stairs. She replied, "But I know there is a lift", but was told that the lift was only for people who worked in the building. The woman had to carry her child up two flights of stairs in order to pay her rate bill.

Such procedures must be outlawed by legislation. People may feel that that is harsh, but we must be harsh. Today I have heard some arguments about the costs, but if we do not take action now, the costs will rise until they are almost prohibitive. The time for action is now.

I have wide experience of disabled people as I have carried out pastoral work for more than 48 years in the city of Belfast. Disabled people do not want the pity or the sympathy of the House; they do not even want protection. They just want their rights to be established. They have a right to certain facilities. Hon. Members in the House today must realise that, because those facilities are not available to disabled people, they are cut off from their families, family outings and the benefits that would accrue to them were they active family members and able to go to the places that the rest of their families visit.

The time has come for the Government to cease erecting barricades and barriers to the Bill and instead to give it a fair wind. As the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe said, we have had many hours of debate on the Bill—it is not undigested legislation; much of the Government's legislation is far less digested than the Bill—and it would be expedient for the House to proceed with it.

The Bill contains the opportunity for the Minister to undertake consultations across the board before he begins regulating. The Government must lift the barriers, give the Bill a fair wind and let disabled people, of whom there are 6.5 million, enjoy their rights. That is what they are arguing for, and they deserve to have those rights. Their rights should be established now and the Government should say that they will back the Bill.

1.4 pm

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): As the reaction of the Public Gallery just showed, the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) expressed the views of the people of this country. We could spend hours and hours saying, "We must look at the problem" and asking, "Has this been thought of?", but how does that sound to disabled people who, as the hon. Gentleman and many other hon. Members have said, want to lead their own lives? That is what the House should seek to deal with.

I pay the warmest tribute to the hon. Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam), who has been in the House a long time and is held in the greatest respect by hon. Members, irrespective of party. He has always been committed and sincere and, to his credit, on an issue to which he is committed, he does not worry too much about the Whips. All people, especially disabled people, look to people like the hon. Member for Exeter for support.

Many other hon. Members, over many years, have been committed to the issue. One should never forget the continuing work of my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), who was committed to the issue at a time when the House and public were not as receptive as they are now to his views. I should also pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry) for introducing the Bill.

Many references have been made to the Second Reading debate and the enormous vote of support that the Bill received then. No hon. Member voted against it. We know, therefore, the feelings of hon. Members, irrespective of their party, when on 11 March they went through the Aye Lobby to support the Bill.

We have a right to feel annoyed and angry that we are now having to debate whether there will be sufficient time for proper discussion of the Bill. We can feel angry and annoyed, but what of the hundreds of thousands of people who are disabled and who saw the debate and vote on 11 March, after years of opportunity, discussion and hope, as a clear sign that, at long last, the Government would introduce the sort of legislation that they have been seeking for so many years?

In the run-up to that debate, all hon. Members received hundreds of letters or cards from their constituents. I cannot believe that any hon. Member, including the Prime Minister, did not have an enormous postbag of letters from constituents begging him to be here and to vote in support of the Bill.

Did any Member say, "I have had a letter from a constituent and I am somewhat sympathetic, but I don't really think now is the time to pursue this. There's the cost and the inconvenience to business"? I bet that not one hon. Member wrote back to his or her constituent to say, "I am sorry. I am sympathetic to a degree, but I will not be supporting that Bill."

When the Bill went into Committee after the Second Reading vote, it should have been clear to the Minister that Parliament had spoken. The Government should have said that, providing there was clear evidence of progress in Committee, whatever time was needed would be made available.

I listened to the Minister's comments about procedure. I know all about procedure as I was a Government Whip for five years. I learnt how legislation is introduced, and the same system still operates. While I was the Government Whip for London Members of Parliament, I attended many meetings with the two Prime Ministers under whom I served, Harold Wilson and James Callaghan. We discussed many Bills and, if the Chief Whip said that one in particular was essential and that Government time had to be made available for it, the Prime Minister of the day always said that Parliament could have that time. We therefore know that the necessary time can be made available if the Government so wish.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood will pay attention to my next remark because it goes to the heart of the matter. The Minister referred to next Friday. He will be aware of the order of business for that day and of the fact that the Bill is second on the list. No one can predict how long the debate on the first Bill will last—it may last one or two hours. Let us consider the various things that could happen next Friday.

The Minister is in a position to tell us whether the Government intend to table amendments to the Bill before next Thursday. If they do, it will slow down, if not kill, any meaningful debate. I know that the Minister cannot comment on the next issue that I wish to raise but I see a Government Whip, the hon. Member for Stevenage (Mr. Wood), in his place, and he knows how the system works. Statements can be made at 11 am on Fridays. As I said, we do not know what time the Bill will come up for debate next week but let suppose that the first Bill is debated for an hour and that consideration of this Bill finally begins at 11.30 am. Can we be given an assurance that there will be no Government statement next Friday?

Mr. Fabricant: Although I have some sympathy with the hon. Gentleman, how can he expect an answer to that question? Whether there is a statement will depend on the events of the week.

Mr. Cox: I think that every hon. Member would accept that, if something of great importance were to happen, it is the Government's duty to make a statement at the earliest opportunity. However, the hon. Gentleman has been here long enough to know that the Government could say that they intended to slip in a statement although it could wait until the following week, thus reducing the time available for debate on the Bill. The hon. Gentleman knows, as the House knows, that a statement generally takes half an hour; it can take much longer. Those are the problems at which my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood needs to look in the coming week.

Let us consider the reaction of disabled groups to the events in the House on 11 March. I have here a copy of the Spastics Society's spring 1994 publication. It has a photograph of people in wheelchairs against the background of the House of Commons and the headline, "Civil Rights Victory". That is how those people saw the vote here on 11 March. They saw it as victory, at long last, in their long campaign. Some 231 hon. Members voted in favour of the Bill and no one voted against. Against that background, one has to ask about the Government's real intentions towards the Bill. Is their real intention to ensure that there is adequate time for discussion?

On 26 February 1993, I introduced a debate in the House on this very subject in which we sought to ensure equality of opportunity for disabled people. I said then that no hon. Member could say that, thankfully, disablement was not a problem in his or her constituency. We have heard today that, on average, there are, sadly, 10,000 people in every constituency who suffer various forms of

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disability. What our constituents expect from us and most certainly from the Government is action—legislation—that will lead to the introduction and development of their civil rights.

We have heard today many examples of the injustices that, sadly, exist. During our debate on 26 February 1993, the Minister said:

"Education and persuasion remain important parts of the way forward".—[*Official Report*, 26 February 1993; Vol. 219, c. 1181.]

Whatever our thoughts on education and persuasion as the way forward—I do not dispute for a minute that they have a role to play—we all know that what is required and what people, especially disabled people and their families, expect is legislation to give them their rights.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood and my right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe have outlined the events of the past 12 years during which hon. Members on both sides have sought to carry through similar legislation. We know, sadly, what has happened repeatedly. The Government, sometimes from malice and sometimes, I am prepared to say, from genuine concern about the possible effects, have delayed the progress of legislation such as we are discussing today.

References have been made today to the Prime Minister. I am sure that many hon. Members visit groups of people and meet individuals who are, sadly, disabled. Such people in my constituency in south London say, "You know, Tom, when we hear the Prime Minister talking about the citizens charter and about what it means, where do we fit in? Do those charters mean anything to us, given our sad disabilities and the restrictions on the way in which we lead our lives?"

It would be interesting to know whether the Prime Minister was thinking about disabled people when we had that blaze of publicity not so long ago about charters. We do not hear too much about them now, but I am told, and I understand, that they are still part of Government policy. We hear all the talk about the Whips and, as I have said, I was a Whip, but if charters are still part of Government policy, I suggest that the Prime Minister of the Government who control the affairs of the country, as the person who can decide the allocation of time for any debate in the House, should insist that sufficient time is given to the Bill.

Indeed, at the beginning of the debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) made what I thought was a very generous comment. He asked the Minister whether, if the Labour Opposition were prepared to give up half of one of their Supply days, the Government would provide another half day so that there would be a whole day allocated for further discussion of the Bill. We did not get very much response from the Minister. It is possible—I hope that I may say it without being unfair—that he is not in a position to make such comments. However, I hope that he pursues that suggestion, because it was obviously made with the approval of the Opposition Chief Whip. One will listen with interest to what will happen.

Let me make one or two further comments in reference to the House of Commons research paper 94/37, which was published on 28 February and which outlined the proposals of the Bill. All of us know, because we make great use of the research papers that the Library provides, that that paper outlines the principal objectives of the Bill on page 2. I shall not comment on them, but on page 11 the paper gives the names of 13 groups representing disabled people which were consulted and which put forward their ideas on the proposals contained in the Bill.

Those 13 groups cover a whole range of disabilities and, as we all know, have a great deal of contact with people throughout the United Kingdom. Every one of those groups was in total support of the Bill which my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood introduced on March 11. To his credit, through today's debate, the hon. Member for Exeter is seeking to ensure that we have adequate time for full discussion of that Bill.

I agree that there must be full discussion of the Bill. Consultation is vital. I thought that we were given to understand that the Minister and his Department were actively involved in the Bill. If they are, I hope that we shall soon see the publication of the results of those consultations. It is not a political issue. I can be critical of the Government for what I see as a delay, but I genuinely believe that they have a commitment to legislation. So I shall not comment on the aspects of speeches that were made by two Conservative Members that I found questionable. I heard all the comments which expressed the sentiment of, "Yes, it is wonderful, but, but, but . . . " We have a right to expect the Government, and the Minister and his Department in particular, to be involved in consultation, to listen to what are no doubt the genuine fears of organisations and businesses, and then to explain to us how they have sought to reassure individuals and organisations that have had comments to make.

On about 20 April I received a letter from the Spastics Society of 19 April, headed:

"Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill".

The letter may have been sent to many other people. The final paragraph says it all in setting out what the House and the Government should be seeking to do. The paragraph reads:

"Having come so far we cannot let the Bill be smothered and die due to the technicalities of Parliamentary Procedure. If this were to happen the 6.5 million disabled people in this country will understandably feel let down and ignored by the democratic process."

I do not think that any hon. Member could better sum up the issue that is at stake. That paragraph sets out the test for the House today, but more so the test that we shall face next Friday. It is a test for the House but, above all, it is a test for the Government, and especially for the Prime Minister.

1.26 pm

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) for bringing forward such an excellent motion. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State has said that the effects of the motion are not technically enforceable, but I am sure that he and other right hon. and hon. Members will accept the spirit of the motion. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry), who has been seeing the Bill through the House.

My natural inclination is to be a libertarian. That approach has been inculcated through my background in business over the past 10 or 12 years and through training at university in economics before that. Initially, I was rather opposed to the Bill as it was presented on Second Reading. That was not because I feel that there should be discrimination against the disabled. I said in an

intervention that I happened to have a political researcher who is disabled. That person is employed not because he is disabled but because he is a good researcher.

I am not a great believer in conversions on the road to Damascus, but to a large degree I am converted in this instance because of the changes that have been made in Committee. It is worth emphasising what the Bill is now certainly not. First, it is not a Bill that is advocating positive discrimination. It is simply a Bill that argues, as it were, that there should be equal opportunity. As I would always argue for libertarianism for industry, I would also argue for libertarianism for our entire population, the able-bodied as well as the disabled.

I believe that the Bill will create a climate and a spirit in which businesses, local authorities and the Government will have to act to introduce legislation in future that is in line with this Bill if it becomes an Act. I hope that it will become an Act given the amendments that were made in Committee.

Although the Committee stage was open in its dealings and there was much co-operation on both sides of the Committee, the Government did not table any amendments. I hope that extra time will be found for the Bill. If there are any other areas on Report, in respect of which the Government believe that the Bill is not as we would wish it to be to the benefit not only of the disabled but of the community as a whole, including business, I hope that the Government will table suitable amendments.

Let us examine more closely the amendments that were made in Committee and why I support the Bill now when I previously did not. The main alteration has occurred in clause 10 under exemptions. Clause 10(1) states that the Secretary of State of the day

"may by regulations provide for the exemption, for a specified period,"—

that is, a period which the Secretary of State specifies—

"of any person or body, or class of person or body, from any requirement of this Part of this Act specified in the regulations."

Clause 10(2) states:

"Regulations under this section may specify different periods of exemption in relation to—

(a) the provision of different goods, facilities or services;

(b) different persons or bodies; or

(c) different classes of persons or bodies."

That means that the Secretary of State can decide who may be exempt from the Bill and for what period they may be exempt.

Those are far-reaching powers. I am prepared to accept that any Secretary of State will be able to make the right judgment and to perform the balancing trick, which always has to be performed, between the requirements of one part of our community and those of another part of our community.

Let us not forget that if we were to force small businesses to introduce ramps, disabled toilets or whatever over a very short period—which would be reducing the Bill to absurdity and which is now not the case—that would not benefit the disabled. Those small businesses would simply go out of business and would not be able to serve the disabled or the able-bodied.

Mr. Hendry: In a small retail community in which shops provide similar services, if the shopkeepers who are most aware of the needs of disabled people carry out the kind of work at an early stage to which my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) referred and possibly at significant cost, how does my hon. Friend square those costs with the fact that less responsible retail businesses, which decided to apply for an exemption on the grounds that they could not afford such work, would be in a better trading position than the shopkeepers who had carried out the letter of the law?

Mr. Fabricant: As ever, my hon. Friend raises a very valid point. However, under the Bill, individual trading bodies or shops would not have to apply for exemptions. Instead, the Secretary of State would specify classes of businesses that are exempt.

My hon. Friend raises another valid point: what about the business that goes to the expense of producing a ramp and other facilities for the disabled? I hope that such a business will get extra custom, and I hope that that extra custom will come from not only the disabled but the able-bodied, who will say that a specific shop or business is proving that it has a duty of care to the community which deserves reward. If that reward is custom, so be it. All things being equal, I know that I will always choose to buy goods in a shop that provides facilities for the disabled, rather than a shop that does not provide such facilities.

Another reason why I support the Bill is the sheer inevitability of this type of Bill becoming law. I shall be somewhat controversial and say that it is as inevitable as the age for homosexual consent reaching equality. I think that, through cowardice, we put off the inevitable a few months ago, and it will inevitably come back again. However, I do not wish to raise such controversial matters at this stage. This Bill is even more inevitable. For that reason, too, I support it.

Some hon. Members have asked why we should put off the inevitable, especially when it would be more expensive if we were not do it now but at a later date. It makes sense to do it now. All the arguments that I have heard from my hon. Friends and Opposition Members where doubts have been expressed have been covered in clause 10 which deals with exemptions. There are further points in the Bill which convince me that the Bill is worth pursuing and passing into law. As I said earlier, I invite the Minister to table amendments on Report if there are still areas that he is unhappy about.

I should like to clear up a few misconceptions about the Bill. As I said, it is not seeking positive discrimination —I am very much against that. It is simply asking for equal opportunities for the disabled, just as there are equal opportunities for the able bodied. I was amused and delighted by the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) who, in a marvellous peroration, put forward the Conservative party philosophy with, dare I say it, such conviction that I almost felt the desire to invite him to join us on this side of the House. As he rightly said, it is Conservative party philosophy that we are one nation. He quoted Winston Churchill. I shall quote from another speech of Winston Churchill. *[Interruption.]* Would the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) like me to give way?

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): I have just walked in. I must not miss the hon. Gentleman's speech —it is wonderful.

Mr. Fabricant: Winston Churchill said that the Conservative party wishes to provide the opportunities for people to soar as high as they can possibly go but also to provide from the wealth created through private enterprise a safety net below which no one should fall. That philosophy is not exclusive to the Conservative party; I am

[Mr. Fabricant]

sure that there are certain socialist modernisers who might also agree with that—if not all Opposition Members. I see some frowns opposite.

Basically, I see nothing in the Bill that is contrary to Conservative party philosophy. All my qualms and fears about the possible damage that it could do to businesses have been allayed by the fact that the Secretary of State of the day can make decisions with regard to what classes of business can be exempted and for how long.

Mr. Sheerman: I will probably take a long time to live down the hon. Gentleman's mention of my remarks. I was trying to make the point clear, because it was depressing to hear some of his colleagues still emphasising the benefit and dependency role of disability and disability legislation.

I want to hear the Minister and Conservative Members saying that the legislation liberates people to benefit both the private and public sectors. Whenever people are given the opportunity to use all their abilities, costs are reduced and wealth is created. That is the whole thrust of the Bill, and I think that there will be undisguised benefits in terms of costs. When the Minister looks into costs—as he is doing now—I hope that he will balance that against the physical modifications which too many people harp on about.

Mr. Fabricant: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. I mentioned that, before I was in business, I read economics at university. One does not need to study economics at university to know that it is always worth while to undertake a cost-benefit analysis. For every cost, there can also be certain benefits, and, as I made clear in an earlier intervention, there will have to be some benefits from a large proportion of the 6.25 million registered disabled people being able to leave social security and get into the jobs market.

They will contribute to the Exchequer and to the wealth of the nation and they will also, as has been pointed out, provide greater dignity for themselves by playing a more active role in the community. That is in no way to condemn those disabled people who would be unable to get a job because of the degree of their disability.

I shall also point out another misconception. We are not talking about extra money for the disabled for a job that they are unable to do. That is not what the Bill is about. It is not about putting people in jobs if they are not capable of doing them. As I understand it, if a disabled person is only able to work at two thirds of the productivity of an able-bodied person because of the degree of his disability, it is accepted in the Bill that that person would, if it was the employer's wish, get two thirds of the wages.

There is no question of positive discrimination. The Bill is very fair, both to employers and to the disabled. I talked about the inevitability of the Bill. It is inevitable not only because of its innate fairness and the rightness of having such a Bill, but because it has been done elsewhere. Not only has it been done elsewhere; it works elsewhere. It works in the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, France and Sweden.

It seems astonishing that anyone in the Chamber can say that a Bill of this nature is unworkable and would provide such great additional costs that the economy would collapse or be seriously damaged as a result. Where the Government are still unhappy, let us make further alterations. But that would require adequate time in this place for Report.

I do not believe that there is one Member of Parliament out of the 651 hon. Members who has not received letters from constituents about the matter. Incidentally, my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) said that it is difficult to believe that there are 10,000 disabled people in his or any constituency. I would not be surprised if it were perhaps not 10,000 but 9,000, 11,000, or some similar figure. The amount of disability in Britain is fairly high. It has been pointed out that one of the reasons for the amount of disability is better health care. People can survive certain types of injury that they could not have survived earlier.

In the past, disabled groups believed that institutional discrimination was the main problem. Anti-discrimination is the form of legislation which is most likely to tackle it.

The Bill may contain several loopholes. It may not be perfect. It may be only a first step, but, unless it is passed, we shall not establish a precedent in United Kingdom legislation. Just as there should not be sexual discrimination, racial discrimination or—now I shall really incur the wrath of the Whips—age discrimination, there should not be discrimination against the disabled. If I had my way, there would be anti-agist legislation, too.

Similarly, there must be legislation to protect the disabled and give them not greater but equal opportunities. Who in the House could deny that?

1.46 pm

Mr. Charles Hendry (High Peak): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to make a brief intervention in this important debate. I join my colleagues on both sides of the House in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) on the way in which he moved the motion. As ever, he did it with the generosity of spirit, common sense and dignity which has won him friends and respect throughout the House.

I also join my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) in saying how much I enjoyed the speech of the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman). He made perhaps the most compelling case of anyone for giving the Bill more time. If his speeches are to consist predominantly of quotations from the speeches of my hon. Friends, the Prime Minister and former Prime Ministers and members of the Cabinet, they will be valuable speeches. It is notable that he could not find a single speech from the Leader of the Opposition or a previous Labour Prime Minister that he wanted to quote. If he wants us to have more time for further debate on the issues so that he can bring to the attention of the House the extremely powerful and noteworthy comments of my right hon. and hon. Friends, that is a powerful emotion indeed.

Mr. Sheerman: If the hon. Gentleman had listened to all of my speech or been present for the Second Reading, he would know that on Second Reading I concentrated precisely on the tradition in the Labour party in favour of disability legislation. I tried to think intellectually and honestly of something different to say today and I lit on an examination of the philosophy of the governing party. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the two speeches, he will find that they contrast quite nicely.

Mr. Hendry: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. I simply wanted to make the point that for those of us on the Conservative Benches it was a great pleasure to hear the articulate words of our colleagues coming from his mouth so clearly.

There is no doubt about the tremendous support and enthusiasm that the motion and the Bill enjoy among the public at large. That is clear from the meetings that I have had with people in my constituency who have disabilities, and from the letters that I have received. Therein, however, lies a dilemma for us. While the Bill is clearly a popular measure, introducing it is like offering a child a lollipop. Of course, the child says, "Yes, I want it." Then if one says to the child, "Now you have to pay for it", he may not want it after all. The costs associated with the Bill must be considered.

Hon. Members have referred to the fact that the Bill was debated extensively in Committee. Hon. Members on both sides of the House would accept, however, that, often, the nature of debate in Committee is not a true reflection of the issues behind the relevant legislation. I am not referring directly to this Bill, but to the Standing Committee on the Tobacco Advertising Bill, on which I served. During that Committee, it became clear that most of the amendments were being tabled by the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman. They were pushed to a vote, although he explained that he did not agree with them. Because of his actions, those of us who had deep reservations about the Bill were forced to curtail our speeches.

Although the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill has been discussed in Committee and amendments were not tabled on behalf of the Government, that should not be taken to mean that the Bill was discussed as fully as it should have been.

Repeated reference has been made to the fact that the campaign for the Bill has lasted for 12 years. Some of my colleagues have also drawn attention to some of the developments in that time. If we look objectively at the position of people with disabilities, it is clear that it has improved significantly over that time, although the rate of that improvement has not been as fast we would have wished.

I do not intend to rehearse the long list of developments and changes, but I should like to pick out a couple which give me the most satisfaction because I was involved in their development when I was an adviser at the Department of Social Security. The disability living allowance and the disability working allowance have made an important contribution towards enabling people with disabilities to lead more fulfilling lives. We can take great pride in that.

The way in which children with disabilities are taught has changed dramatically and represents an absolute breakthrough. I welcome whole-heartedly the fact that children with disabilities now go through the main education system wherever possible, rather than being hived off into special schools. There is a need for such schools for children with the most severe disabilities, but the fact that many other children with disabilities are integrated in the mainstream education system is a welcome development.

I also welcome the improvements in premises owned by the Government. On Wednesday, I opened a new jobcentre in Glossop in my constituency, which combines the former jobcentre with the unemployment benefit office. Anyone who knew the old building would agree that it was a most hostile environment not just for people claiming unemployment benefit, but particularly for people with disabilities. The barriers and glass screens made access difficult for disabled people. Although there were three means of access to the building—one for women, one for men and one for employers—there was no means of access for people with disabilities. The building has changed beyond recognition and that means that people with disabilities who are seeking work will now be aided back into work, or into work for the first time, in a much more user-friendly environment.

I accept that a great deal more needs to be done. I am certain that discrimination is still too widespread. I am aware that too many employers who know in advance that an applicant has disabilities are less likely to interview that person and will opt for someone who is able bodied. Such practice cannot continue to be accepted by a civilised society.

Progress to end discrimination is still too slow. I was particularly shocked by the figures produced by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), who has done so much for the Bill, which revealed how Government Departments have failed to meet the voluntary target to have work forces of whom 3 per cent. are people with disabilities. The fact that one Department has reached just 0.3 per cent., or one tenth, of that target, must be addressed.

Many of us are concerned that the proposed legislation would mean that significant costs were incurred in converting buildings to make them easily accessible to people with disabilities, though I accept the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire that such conversions would enable more people to shop in retail outlets and therefore boost business. To many of them, it would also bring in a different type of business —for example, mothers with pushchairs, who at the moment cannot take their children into those shops.

It must be accepted that many of the businesses in our constituencies which are experiencing difficulties in a market which is beginning to pick up but in which the recovery is slow would find it difficult to undertake those conversion costs now or in the foreseeable future.

Let me consider a couple of towns in my constituency and relate that directly to the experience that I see about me in High Peak. Buxton would never have been built if one had been thinking about the needs of people with disabilities, because there are not many towns with more slopes and hills. New Mills, not far away, is not dissimilar in many ways. Buxton was developed due to the healing spa waters there, which attracted many people with disabilities to go there.

In Buxton, perhaps some of the earliest facilities in the country for disabled people are being refurbished—the Slopes. The Slopes were a series of slopes of different gradients where people who were recovering from debilitating illnesses could start to walk up increasingly steep gradients day by day. There they were able gradually to be returned to full health. As a result of money being committed by High Peak borough council, by the Government and by the European Union, those are being restored and they are a tremendous asset in the town.

The geography of Buxton means that the cost of ensuring that all the retail outlets were accessible to people with disabilities would be enormous. We have a huge number of retail outlets, public buildings and houses to which access can be gained only by climbing a significant number of steps.

[Mr. Hendry]

We have a jewel of an opera house, the Buxton opera house, built almost 100 years ago. It desperately wants to do more to make itself accessible to people with disabilities, but, at the moment, that is not easy. There are narrow stairways, access is up little narrow streets and it would be difficult, and would cost a tremendous amount of money, for those conversions to be carried out. The opera house has led the way in signing stage plays and operas. It is one of the first opera houses in the country to sign opera. That is an indication of its desire for the facilities to be improved, but a tremendous cost will be involved in making access available in the near future to people with disabilities.

Mr. Fabricant: I am familiar with the Buxton opera house, which is an excellent opera house, and I have been to several performances there, including a performance of "The Magic Flute" a while ago, which was excellently done.

Does my hon. Friend agree, however, that the Bill has been amended—although I would not encourage opera houses or other places of entertainment to take that route —to enable the Secretary of State, should he so wish, to say that old buildings or buildings of a specific size or shape could be exempt for so many years from undertaking such work, especially if such work might jeopardise the existence of the opera house?

Mr. Hendry: That clause has significantly improved the Bill as it stands. We shall now enter a legal minefield about what constitutes a right to appeal against that. People may say that they cannot afford to do the work, when they may be able to do it. If two shops are next door to one other and one is granted an exemption but the other is not, although one may attract more business as a result, it has obviously had to put much money up front and, in the difficult economic trading climate, that may cause it further difficulties.

Last week, I met some people with disabilities in Chapel-en-le-Frith, a village in my constituency. There has been significant coverage in the local newspapers of the difficult trading circumstances in that village and in towns and villages nearby. We have a number of empty shops there and I am cautious about imposing further costs on those businesses—indeed, pressure of any type on those businesses—in addition to the costs that they must incur to survive the recession. I accept what my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire has just said. It must be accepted that inherent in the Bill are additional costs on companies and businesses. We must consider those factors.

A disabled constituent could not come to my surgery and felt that discrimination was being practised. Access to the Conservative association office is up a flight of stairs, so people with disabilities find it difficult to enter it. I offered to give my constituent a home visit so that, instead of a surgery slot of a quarter of an hour, I gave a one-and-a-half hour visit, which I thought had served my constituent's interests better than a visit to a surgery. What people with disabilities sometimes regard as discrimination can be used to ensure that their problems are listened to and answered.

Castleton caverns in my constituency are a series of internationally renowned underground caverns—I suppose that caverns are, by definition, underground. The nature of the caverns means that they are difficult to enter. If the caverns have to comply with the regulations, it will have to be on the understanding that, geographically, by their very nature, they may not be able to be used by people who require wheelchairs.

We must consider the transport provisions of the Bill. We all know that trains with slam doors cannot be converted for wheelchair use. There is a programme to improve them and replace them with more modern rolling stock, but that will take time. The Bill must contain an acceptance that changes will take a long time. I fully accept the assurances of my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter that no physical date has been put on the changes.

The biggest danger is that we may raise a banner of hope for people with disabilities when we say that the issues will be tackled and the law now says so, then in 10, 20 or 30 years' time, disabled people find that the changes have not taken place because the legislation contained no time scale. Their sense of frustration and betrayal will become all the greater. Therefore, when we take action now, we must ensure that the provisions that we deliver are enforceable.

When we talk about the provision of taxis or the conversion of taxis for use by people with disabilities, we must be aware of the tremendous costs entailed. The taxis that are most readily usable by people with disabilities are black cabs, which cost £20,000-plus. There is one black cab in the borough of High Peak, and it is used by people with wheelchairs. If we require every taxi in High Peak to be converted to a black cab over a certain period, we shall put most of the cab drivers in Buxton and the rest of the borough out of business because they simply cannot justify or afford that investment.

Attitudes to disabled people in employment are changing. With each generation of new managers and people who have grown up with people with disabilities around them, we have become much more open minded and far less discriminatory in our attitudes towards people with disabilities. That means that opportunities for people with disabilities will improve.

There are tremendous examples in High Peak of companies that employ well above their quota level of disabled people. Otter Controls, a firm in Buxton which makes electronic equipment and electrical components, employs well above the level set in the voluntary code. If we simply say that 3 per cent. of a company's work force must be disabled people, companies that employ above that level will say that they have fulfilled their legal obligation and cannot justify to their shareholders taking on more people with disabilities. The best employers would scale back because the law simply required them to meet a floor level.

The voluntary agreement has not worked as well as it should have—in the public sector it has not worked nearly as well as it should have done. The Government could make a much clearer commitment to ensuring that those targets will be met within government. The right hon. Member for Wythenshawe gave a high figure of, I think, 100,000 jobs for disabled people that were being created by Government Departments. That is an important way forward and legislation is not necessarily required to achieve that goal.

It is clear from what my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter has said that employers are far less unhappy with the Bill's provisions than they would initially have been. That clearly opens up an opportunity for them to say,

"Let's see how we can actively work together to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities." That would encourage individual employers to meet the targets that they have said that they are willing to meet.

Much more can be done under the voluntary code. If disability groups in our constituencies said to shops, "To make your shop accessible to somebody in a wheelchair, this is what you will need to do and this is a rough idea of what it will cost", I am sure that many shopkeepers would say, "That is not as much as I thought it would cost; I will do it." Shopkeepers probably never considered doing so before because nobody helped them to take that next step.

The needs of disabled people will be increasingly borne in mind by the House and the country. We must strengthen current legislation and the Bill undoubtedly does that. The legal complications, the grey areas and the aspects open for debate in court and elsewhere still give grounds for concern, but this debate and the one next week and the future progress of the Bill give us a chance to express our genuine concerns to ensure that people with disabilities play a full part in the life and work of this country.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, in the opinion of this House, Her Majesty's Ministers should provide sufficient time on the floor of the House before 27 May 1994 to allow all remaining stages of the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill to be completed, and that sufficient time be provided before the end of the Session for the consideration of any Amendments to the Bill which may be made by the House of Lords.

Former Members

2.6 pm

Mr. Michael Clapham (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I beg to move,

That this House wishes to place on record its appreciation for the lives of Mr. Jimmy Boyce, the honourable Member for Rotherham who died on 25th January 1994, Jo Richardson, the honourable Member for Barking who died on 1st February 1994, Mr. Ron Leighton, the honourable Member for Newham North East who died on 28th February 1994 and Mr. Bob Cryer, the honourable Member for Bradford South who died on 12th April 1994, all of whom were dedicated to the cause of socialism and world peace, an understanding which defined their continuity of purpose and assisted in their approach to their Parliamentary work, where they had a total of 52 accumulated years of experience, as well as many years of experience gained outside this place in the trade unions and local government which shaped their consciousness and sharpened their sense of determination so that they each in their unique way articulated through the Parliamentary procedure a radical tradition in opposing the evils of unemployment, poverty, deprivation, discrimination and inequality which they considered could only be overcome by a democratic socialist programme of reform to create a society based on freedom, justice, fairness and equality and that in this way their efforts continued to nurture the liberty tree in the way of the Levellers, Tom Paine, the Chartists and the early pioneers of the Labour Party before them.

It is with great humility, as a relatively new Member of the House, that I move the motion. I am aware of the enormous contribution to the cause of socialism and to the work of this place that the four hon. Members mentioned in the motion, individually and collectively, made.

Other hon. Members who knew some of the four former Members much more intimately than I did wish to speak in support of the motion. I am aware that some hon. Members who knew the four former Members well and who appreciated sharing their lives are not able to be here today.

I wish to make two small points at the outset. First, I noted Madam Speaker's ruling yesterday that there was sufficient provision on the Order Paper for tributes to former hon. Members, and obviously this tribute is being paid through a motion on the Order Paper. Secondly, I am not a great believer in the personality cult, but I think it right that motions can be put on the Order Paper by colleagues who wish to pay tribute to former colleagues whose lives they shared.

The four hon. Members mentioned in the motion made their contribution in a radical tradition. That, I believe, is how history will record them. I shall say more about the radical tradition, but first I wish to say a little about each of the Members.

Jimmy Boyce was the hon. Member for Rotherham. He died on 25 January 1994 and was part of the new intake of members following the 1992 general election. He was a Scot who moved down to Yorkshire in search of employment. He quickly settled around Sheffield and became an active member of his local community. Jimmy was a rather thoughtful man. He became an active trade unionist, which was how I first came to know him in the 1970s. Later, he went on to Northern college, where I came to know him better. After completing his course there, he went to Sheffield university. It was in his capacity as a local councillor in Sheffield that he became respected as a hard worker. He cared about people and about his community.

Having been made redundant from the steel works, he remained unemployed until he was elected to Parliament.

[Mr. Michael Clapham]

That experience of unemployment deepened his understanding of the powerlessness that people can feel in that situation. He came to the House with a sense of purpose and was determined to empower people. He was also a jovial man who liked company, and company liked him.

Jo Richardson, the former hon. Member for Barking who died on 1 February 1994, was a phenomenon. Her career spanned 50 years of Labour party history. Born a Geordie, she was elected in 1974 to represent Barking although she had been active in London politics for a great many years before that. Indeed, she was secretary of the Tribune group for 30 years from 1948 to 1978. She was a passionate fighter for women's rights and became chairperson of the organisation called Women's Rights, which she made an effective champion of the cause of women in society. There is no doubt that, had Labour won the previous election and if her health had held out, Jo Richardson would have become Britain's first Minister for Women's Affairs. In addition to being a feminist, she was an ardent unilateralist.

Ron Leighton, the former hon. Member for Newham, North-East, was a printer by trade and an active trade unionist. I first met him when he was spearheading the campaign against Britain's entry into the Common Market in the 1970s. It was a political position that he was to maintain for the rest of his life. He was opposed to the Common Market and to Britain's involvement in it.

During the bitter struggle in the printing industry, he kept in close touch with his union and with the men on the picket lines. As well as being interested in employment issues and Europe, he was a fervent supporter of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

Bob Cryer, the former hon. Member for Bradford, South who died on 12 April 1994, was known as an extremely hard working politician. He was a master of parliamentary procedure and was perhaps one of the House's most effective critics of Government policy. I first met him after he had been elected to represent Keighley in 1974. Over the years, I had the honour of being on a number of platforms with him. In 1958, Bob joined CND and became an official of that organisation. He was a vociferous opponent of nuclear weapons until his untimely death.

Collectively, the four former hon. Members had accumulated a total of 52 years of understanding of the procedures of the House. In addition, they were involved for many years in the wider trade union and Labour movement outside the House. Their accumulated knowledge was used in a meaningful way to help the causes that they championed.

They were aware of the pervading effects of the evils of unemployment, poverty, deprivation and inequality and what they did to the human spirit. Their understanding was born of their working class experience which fired their radicalism. That radicalism became the embodiment of their fight for democratic socialism as a means to move people out of poverty and to pave the way to economic and social freedom.

That was the radical tradition that the four hon. Members followed. Through the procedures of the House, they articulated that tradition. They understood how mastery of the procedures in this place could be used to further their cause and the causes that they represented. They saw that as a way in which to empower the struggle for freedom, for justice, for fairness and for equality. As the motion says:

"their efforts continued to nurture the liberty tree"

that had been firmly planted in the late 18th century and 19th century.

I have no doubt that had the four hon. Members lived to see it, they would have been extremely proud of the fact that South Africa was this week taking the first cautious steps towards democracy and freedom. They would have been among the first to wish Nelson Mandela good luck in implementing measures to transform his society for freedom, justice and equality.

2.15 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham), having drawn second place in the ballot for motions, has taken the opportunity to table this motion. In all the 24 years in which I have been a Member of Parliament, I have not seen that done before. In view of what Madam Speaker said yesterday, it would be a good idea if other hon. Members did the same. We all know that if one has second place in the motions on the Order Paper on a Friday or a Monday, the chance of speaking at any length is small. In most circumstances, the hon. Member who has tabled the first motion would allow the tributes motion to be moved. It is clear that the Speaker did not want to change the system, which has lasted for a long time. However, I believe that it would be a good idea for the Speaker to make an announcement straight after Question Time, similar to that made when a new Member of Parliament is introduced, enabling a statement to be made about the death of a Member when the House is relatively full. That would be a good idea, even if there was not a tribute.

Because I asked for tributes to be allowed, I was attacked by *The Guardian*. In January 1977, I was on the Government Benches when it was announced that there would a tribute to Lord Avon who had been a Member of the House until 1957. Although 20 years had elapsed, it was decided that, because he was an ex-Prime Minister, we should have the day off. I did not oppose the tributes. What I opposed was the fact that Parliament would finish for the day. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone and other hon. Members here today would not accept an elitist method whereby the deaths of ex-Prime Ministers resulted in a day off when there were many items of business with which to deal. Like my hon. Friend, I am concerned that we have a chance to speak for a few minutes about our colleagues.

It is important that we point out that the four people referred to in the tribute all came from the section of the party that is called working class. Jimmy Boyce came from the engineering industry. He never had a real chance to do the job that he was sent to do, but he showed a great deal of promise and he would have been a tremendous asset to the Labour party and to the socialist cause if he had been able to have his operation successfully. He was a man of real substance and hon. Friends who knew him better than I did would concur with that view.

Ron Leighton came from the printers' union and he never changed his mind about anything. As everyone knows, that is not easy because there are many pressures in the House. I remember Ron being against the Common

Market before he came to the House, and by the time he left he was still in the same place. During the many debates on Maastricht, we could always rely on Ron. Despite his illness, he turned up to vote against Maastricht. He, too, was a tremendous asset to the Labour party and to Parliament in general.

I met Jo Richardson before she was a Member of Parliament when she was secretary of the left-wing group in the House of Commons, with some of my hon. Friends. Her role in Parliament was not only as a Member of Parliament, but as a secretary and a researcher and so on for many years before that. Her role on the left wing of the Labour party was tremendous. Her role on behalf of women was even more stupendous. Nobody can deny that she poured everything into trying to achieve equality for women and she did it despite the fact that, for the last 15 years of her parliamentary life, she was crippled with osteo-arthritis of a tremendously disabling kind. Nevertheless, despite those disabilities, she carried on and travelled round the country speaking all over Britain. She was a tower of strength to all of us who wanted to help in that struggle for equality.

I shall never forget the day when she was in the Tea Room and said, "Dennis, what shall we do? Enoch Powell is going to keep us here all weekend and stop embryo research. What can we do?" I said, "Leave it to me." I did not have a clue what I was going to do, but I found a system, which has since been disallowed. Enoch Powell was sat ready to pounce on Friday morning to keep us here all weekend and I moved the writ for Brecon and Radnor and Jo's face beamed. Of course, there were other plans afoot that day. My association with Jo was extremely strong and she will be missed by all of us on the Labour Benches and no doubt by many Conservative Members as well.

As for Bob, it is hard for me to do it; but a tremendous tribute was paid to him in Bradford on Saturday when more than 2,000 people turned up and lined the streets of the city. He was a great socialist, a great parliamentarian, a great politician. He knew all about railways—not only collecting numbers, but where the stations were—he knew all about old cars, he knew all about the Common Market from the inside and the outside. He, too, opposed it vigorously on all the occasions on which he had the chance. He was a great local campaigner in Bradford and in that area generally.

I shall miss him for the rest of my life because I always knew that, whenever we got the chance to challenge the Government at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning, Bob would be there to be a Teller and he would know that I would be there. As a matter of fact, I met him at a Labour party conference way back in the early 1960s. What was he doing? He was moving a point of order. It was like the money resolution of the Labour party. That is how I first met him. Here was this bloke who had a slightly better way of speaking than me. His diction was perfect, as many who heard him late at night knew. He never changed. He moved a point of order at that conference and I thought, "He probably will not do it right. He has not been here before." But he was perfect and, from that day on, the association grew. I know that everybody in the House will miss his tremendous contribution.

A large number of people from all parties who sent letters to his wife Ann and to the family wrote great tributes to the work that he did in Parliament. Of course he was an extra-parliamentarian as well. He did not believe that the House was where it all began—he knew that arguments and conflicts also occurred outside.

I cannot repeat all the things that were said about Bob. Other hon. Members will want to speak and I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) wants to make his contribution. I only wish to say to my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone that he has done the House proud by giving us a chance to pay those tributes. I hope that other motions will follow so that such tributes may be made in future. We have lost four good people on the Labour side of the House. We would have loved those people to be here to carry on the struggle and to be here not only for South African democracy day but for the Canadian whitewash, which will come the next time that there is an election.

2.23 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham) on securing this short debate. I hope that it will persuade Madam Speaker and the Procedure Committee, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has said, to change our procedures so that in future when there is the tragic death of a Member there is an opportunity for those hon. Members who wish to pay a tribute so to do in a reasonable and appropriate way.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover said, the four ex-Members to whom we are paying tribute were four different personalities. What joined them was that they came from the working class, and during their time in this place they never forgot where they came from or who they represented.

I knew Jimmy Boyce for only a short time. He was denied any reasonable parliamentary life by his tragic death. His friends have paid tributes to his constituency work and his parliamentary work. I shall refer only to his support for the self-determination of the people of Kashmir. His efforts in that regard were widely appreciated.

Jo Richardson dominated this place for 20 years. Throughout most of that time she was stuffed full of painkillers. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover said, she performed extraordinary duties here while having demanding speaking engagements throughout the country, all the while suffering great discomfort and, indeed, pain. The moving memorial meeting that took place at Central hall on Wednesday night allowed people throughout political and non-political life to pay their tribute to Jo. My abiding memory will be of Madam Speaker referring to Jo as her comrade and friend.

Ron Leighton was a printer. He had his heart and soul in the printing industry, and when he came to this place he brought all his values and priorities with him. I thank him for the work that he did for me in securing my first election to this place in 1974, and for all that he did for trade unionists and others in shaping or moulding legislation, especially employment legislation.

Lastly, but by no means least, I shall say a few words about Bob Cryer. I came to this place in 1974 with Bob, he for Keighley and I for what is now Calder Valley. Sadly, he was to be defeated in 1983. He was returned as the Member for Bradford, South in 1987. Throughout his time here Bob regarded himself as a full-time Member. He was

[Mr. Max Madden]

almost the definition of a full-time, Monday-to-Friday parliamentarian. Yet he did not neglect his constituency. Virtually every weekend he organised an advice centre. There were opportunities for people to bring to him their problems, however small or great. He translated those problems into parliamentary and national issues.

It is extraordinary to remember that, since 1987, he had asked more than 1,600 questions, sponsored nearly 250 motions and supported 1,127 motions. That was the nature of Bob Cryer. He was a superb parliamentarian, a conscientious constituency Member and a friend whom many of us will sadly miss for many years to come.

This place has lost four extraordinary men and women in recent weeks and months. They will all be sadly missed by this place for many years to come.

2.28 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): In one sentence, as a Conservative Back-Bench Member, I associate Conservative Members with the tributes paid to the four hon. Members.

2.28 pm

Mr. Kevin Hughes (Doncaster, North): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham) for giving us the opportunity to pay tribute to our ex-colleagues. As only two minutes are available to me, I shall not be able to use my notes.

We have lost four good colleagues and four good friends. I shall say a few words about Jimmy Boyce, who was a colleague and an extremely good and close friend. Given the circumstances in which we work, it is not very often that we make a real, proper and lasting friendship of the sort that Jimmy and I enjoyed. We have colleagues and people whom we know, but to have what Jimmy called a real pal is something that few of us enjoy. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) had a similar relationship with Bob Cryer.

Jimmy Boyce and I spent quite a lot of time together and it is a crying shame that he never had a real opportunity to sparkle in this place. Given the time, he would certainly have created opportunities for himself. The man's socialism and commitment were born out of his upbringing in Paisley, Scotland. He was a determined socialist. As a politician, he was absolutely unrelenting in pushing his cause forward. As a man, he was warm, friendly and witty.

Most of the people who met Jimmy Boyce liked him. Those of us who knew him loved him. He once said to me, "We're only here once, make sure you give the ball a good kick." My God, Jimmy Boyce gave that ball a good kick.

Mr. Charles Hendry (High Peak) *rose—*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am afraid that the debate has concluded. Mr. Bob Cryer, the late hon. Member for Bradford, South, would have understood the rule perfectly.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Bills

ASSISTANCE FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY LEASEHOLDERS

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 15 July.

REFERENDUM (SCOTLAND) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.—[Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.]

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Not moved.

SALE OF GOODS (AMENDMENT) BILL [*LORDS*]

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

STATE HOSPITALS (SCOTLAND) BILL [*LORDS*]

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on which the following business is set down for consideration, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall—

(1) put the Questions on the Motions in the names of Mr. Secretary Patten relating to Education, Mr. Secretary Rifkind relating to Defence, Mr. Secretary MacGregor relating to Merchant Shipping and Mr. Secretary Howard relating to Immigration not later than Seven o'clock;

(2) put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of the Prime Minister relating to aid to the Italian steel industry not later than one and a half hours after their commencement; and

(3) put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of the Prime Minister relating to equal pay and equal treatment (burden of proof) not later than one and a half hours after their commencement.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

EUROPEAN STANDING COMMITTEES

Ordered,

That European Community Documents Nos. 10166/93 and 11317/93, relating to aid for restructuring the Italian steel industry, and 6703/88, relating to equal pay and equal treatment (burden of proof), shall not stand referred to European Standing Committee B.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

STANDING COMMITTEE B

Ordered,

That, during the proceedings on the Trade Marks Bill [*Lords*], Standing Committee B have leave to sit twice on the first day on which it shall meet.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Heathrow Airport

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

2.31 pm

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): I am grateful for this opportunity to raise yet again an issue that is at the forefront of the minds of my constituents—the future of Heathrow airport and how that future will affect their lives.

The House will recall, although it bears repeating, that Heathrow airport is the busiest international airport in the world as it handles about 40 million international passengers. If we include domestic passengers, the figure rises to almost 45 million. Around 90 airlines operate at Heathrow representing 85 countries serving more than 220 destinations.

That traffic is reflected in the fact that there are more than 400,000 aircraft movements a year at Heathrow or, to put it another way, about 1,000 movements a day. That activity is handled by 50,000 staff who work at the airport and a further 20,000 people whose jobs are directly related to the airport's activities.

Those statistics indicate quite clearly not only the international status of Heathrow, but the part that it plays in the local economy in terms of jobs and in the national economy in terms of international income earned by the airport. Heathrow has a vital role to play and it is important not to forget that it also operates within a wider local community whose views deserve to be heard and, whenever possible, acted upon, and to whom the aviation industry must pay due deference. It is within that context that Heathrow and its potential for future development must be considered.

I have been involved in the activities of the airport, first as a local councillor on Hillingdon council between 1974 and 1986, which included the public inquiry on the fourth terminal, and from 1983 until now as the Member of Parliament for the constituency that includes the airport. I believe that I am therefore competent to talk about the issues as they affect the locality and, more important, as they affect my constituents and the environment in which they have to live.

Some months ago, the Government set up a working party to examine the need for runway capacity in the south-east of England—RUCATSE—well into the next century. That working party sat for many months and, although it had only four options to consider, its conclusions, which were published last August, were that all the options should remain open. That unhelpful conclusion, by a group of people who should have known better, was put out to consultation by the Government. The period of consultation ends at the end of May this year —I suspect that it is one of the longest consultation periods that we have had for a long time.

One of the options, that of building a third runway at Heathrow, was so ridiculous it would have meant the complete annihilation of three villages in my constituency —Sipson, Harmondsworth and Harlington—to say nothing of knocking down more than 3,000 homes which even a child of five could see was not a viable option either economically or socially. Nevertheless, the working party of so-called experts decided to leave it in their report as one of the options.

About the same time as RUCATSE was coming to its ineffective and inappropriate conclusions, the British Airports Authority was in the process of making a planning application to build terminal 5. That site would be on the old Perry Oaks sludge works site to the west of my constituency. The application was based on BAA figures which indicated a need for more terminal capacity at about the turn of the century. However, it must be made absolutely clear that, from the outset, BAA has insisted that the building of a fifth terminal in no way indicated the need for a third runway. It believes that the present runway capacity at Heathrow is sufficient to cope with additional passengers using the extra terminal. Latterly, British Airways has also come to that conclusion.

Incidentally, at this juncture let me make it plain that British Airways has now purchased a site, again to the west of my constituency, to build a new head office. In doing so, it has returned a great deal of what can only be described as scrubland to the community in order to utilise a small portion of what was green belt for office use. British Airways has made it clear—I re-emphasise the point—that it is in the business of flying aeroplanes, not building terminals or runways, and that Prospect Park, which is the name given to its new site, will be used only for office facilities and has not been bought with the intention of selling the land to allow BAA to build another terminal there some time in the future. Only scaremongers who are seeking to make political capital out of the situation are peddling such malicious and unjustified rumours.

Talking of unjustified and malicious rumours, I remind the House and my constituents that during the 1992 general election campaign the local Labour party, in a leaflet, told the electorate that if the Tories won the election, within six weeks of that victory a Cabinet decision would be taken to build a third runway at Heathrow. It is now some two years since our election victory and no such decision has been made; nor is it likely to be made.

Once again, the objective of the malicious rumours and lies was to frighten people into voting Labour at the last election. They lied then about the future of Heathrow, and they are lying now when they tell people about the so-called proposals to build a third runway at the airport.

The current campaign, which is supported by the Labour-controlled Hillingdon council and paid for by local council taxpayers, is bringing a blight to many homes in my constituency. There are no proposals to build a third runway at Heathrow, and any solicitor acting on behalf of a potential purchaser of a home in any of the three villages would not in any normal search procedure find any reference to proposals to build such a runway.

However, due to the campaign augmented and orchestrated by the local Labour party, the attention of potential purchasers and their legal advisers has been drawn to the non-existent proposals to such an extent that word of mouth has been sufficient to discourage people from buying homes in these areas. The blight—that is what it is—must be laid at the door of the local Labour party and those who go along with its programme of rumour, innuendo and lies. No blame can be attached to either the RUCATSE report or the Government, neither of whom has proposed or recommended the building of a third runway at the airport.

The local Labour party in general, and one or two individuals in particular—especially my Labour opponent at the last election, who seems to believe that if he tells enough lies often enough somebody somewhere will

[Mr. Terry Dicks]

believe him—deserve no credit for their behaviour. I know that my constituents will not forgive them for the worry and heartache that their lies have caused them.

Let me once again spell out to the House where I stand on the issue of the future of Heathrow airport. First, I am proud of Heathrow airport and its international status. I am also proud of those who work at the airport and provide an excellent service to the many millions of travellers who pass through their hands throughout the year. I must also give credit to the BAA which has been prepared, especially in recent years, to listen to representations made to it and, where possible, to take the appropriate action. Sir John Egan, the chairman of the BAA, and Mike Roberts, who is responsible for the airport itself, must take a great deal of credit for that change of approach. I especially commend Mike Roberts for the way in which he kept the airport running during the time of the IRA mortar attacks. He did a superb job at that time, and credit for that should be put on the record.

Heathrow airport is there and is going to remain there for some considerable time, although there are occasions when I wish that I could lift it up and drop it in Hackney. That does not mean, however, that local residents have to take second place to the wishes and, sometimes, the demands of the aviation industry. I hope that my views will be seen as reflecting the wishes and needs of the community, while trying to understand the value of Heathrow airport to the economy of this country.

The public inquiry into the application by the BAA to build a fifth terminal will soon be under way and, while I can understand its justification to the aviation industry, I believe that concessions must be made by that industry to local residents before I, as their local Member of Parliament, can come out in favour of a fifth terminal.

First, we need a clear statement by the Government that, once the consultation period is over and after some time has been set aside to consider the views put forward during that consultation period, there will be no third runway at Heathrow. Nobody wants it or needs it and, in any case, the social costs would be catastrophic. When a working party of so-called experts have left such an option in their report, it says little about their expertise, but an awful lot about their lack of common sense.

Secondly, there must be a ban on night flights in and out of Heathrow. I can see no reason whatever to allow any flight to take place between 11.30 pm and 5 am. If we switched to summer time, or to double summer time, 5 am would become in reality 6 am or 7 am, which would be even better for those people who live under the flight path.

Airlines will have to make some adjustments to their take-off times for planes coming from the far east, but that would be a small price to pay. The airlines' argument about quieter aeroplanes carries little weight with me, because all aeroplanes are noisy at low levels, and it is flying at those relatively low levels which causes the sleep of local residents to be interrupted.

Perhaps my hon. Friend can explain why the only opposition to my proposals regarding the adjustment of night flights comes from his officials. Perhaps he can give some details about why he is opposed to it. Incidentally, I should like to know the number of movements per night hour. That would be purely for information, but it would be indicative of the pressure points throughout the night.

Thirdly, I still believe that a limit on aircraft movements at the airport is viable. If Heathrow has international status, that means that some domestic flights have to take second place to international ones. While some passengers on domestic flights fly to Heathrow to connect with international flights, I believe that the numbers of such passengers has been overstated. There is certainly a case for doing away with some domestic flights, while the major ones—Heathrow to Glasgow, Edinburgh, Belfast, Manchester and perhaps Newcastle—should remain.

Such a reduction in movements will do one of two things. It could enable some international airlines to arrive at Heathrow, with the contribution that that would make to the British economy, or it could reduce substantially the number of all movements in and out of the airport. Whatever the choice, the Government and the BAA must examine it closely during the next few months.

I will go further today. I believe that there should be a cap placed on movements at Heathrow at 350,000 a year. I think that that is viable and workable, and I think that I could persuade most of my constituents to accept that figure. It would mean some adjustments being made at the airport to achieve those figures.

Access by road to Heathrow has always been a problem and, at present, it can be chaotic at peak periods. Improvements are needed urgently, and widening the M25 to some 14 lanes—as was once suggested—is not the answer, because the traffic must come off those lanes and converge on a two or three-lane spur into Heathrow. Tailbacks—far from getting better—would be almost certain to get worse.

The environmental impact, to say nothing of the pollution for local residents, cannot be justified and nor can the cost to taxpayer. I am delighted that the Secretary of State is now having second thoughts about this proposal. If we cannot find environmentally acceptable ways of improving surface access to Heathrow at present, how on earth can we consider building a fifth terminal with all of the additional pressures which that would bring?

I hope and expect that my hon. Friend's Department will announce before the House rises for the summer—and not towards the end of the year, as has been indicated elsewhere—that there will be no third runway at Heathrow and that that option from RUCATSE will be buried for ever, along with the scaremongering statements made by the local Labour party. My constituents living in the three villages of Sipson, Harmondsworth and Harlington must have this unjustified and unnecessary fear taken out of their lives, bearing in mind the pressures that they already have to accept living adjacent to the world's busiest international airport.

The Minister, when speaking to my local paper, condemned what he called the NIMBY approach which he appeared to attribute to some of my constituents. He should realise that it is not just the backyard that is under threat from a third runway, but the whole damn house. That is what worries my constituents.

In case I have not made my opposition clear, let me spell it out to my hon. Friend. No other runway required, I say. If one puts the first letters of those words together, they make the name Norris. Norris for short, but I hope not for long. The Government will ignore the warning that I give at their peril. To do so would be to commit political hara kiri in west London and the surrounding areas.

My constituents are worried and will continue to be worried until the Government make a clear statement. They must do so within a short time limit.

2.44 pm

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) on securing the debate. I know that it is an important subject for him and for all the people in his constituency. It is also important for the economy of London and the whole country. I am glad to have the opportunity to describe the Government's position. Before I begin, I shall join my hon. Friend in congratulating Mike Roberts of Heathrow. I agree with my hon. Friend that he did an excellent job during the recent security incident.

Heathrow is a major source of employment: 50,000 people work there either directly or indirectly. It is a great motor for the creation of employment in the surrounding area. At the same time, it is undeniable that large airports can be uncomfortable neighbours. It is right that my hon. Friend and other hon. Members who have constituencies in the area should bring those concerns and fears to the House, to Ministers and to the British Airports Authority. It is in all our interests that those concerns should be followed through.

I shall go through the subjects that my hon. Friend raised one by one. We had the opportunity to discuss night flights at some length last May in an Adjournment debate. My hon. Friend asked some detailed questions about movement numbers. I hope that he will forgive me if I do not answer them at this second, but instead say that I shall look at the record and write to him with detailed answers on the points that he has raised.

We recognise straightforwardly that noise at night can be disturbing. That is why since 1962 there has been a restriction on aircraft operations at night. However, there has never been a total ban on night operations at Heathrow. That was given serious consideration in 1976-77, but after consultation a decision was made to allow night operations to continue while seeking to ensure that eventually all such operations would be carried out by quiet types of aircraft. That policy was confirmed in the 1985 White Paper on airports policy and again before the introduction of the restrictions that applied from 1 April 1988 to 24 October 1993.

The current restrictions reflect the wide consultations undertaken last year. They are intended to maintain the balance between the needs of the airlines to operate at night and the wishes of local people to sleep without undue disturbance. I hope that the arrangements for monitoring the night restrictions introduced last October, including the audit trail announced on 1 February this year, will reassure local people that monitoring is working satisfactorily.

Various other noise abatement measures such as noise preferential routes and use of quiet take-off and landing procedures are used and Heathrow Airport Ltd. has introduced a noise and track-keeping system, which is used for monitoring the performance of airlines. Infringements of the noise limits at night and at certain times during the day are penalised by fines.

My hon. Friend mentioned the fifth terminal. General passenger forecasts suggest strong and continuing growth of demand for air travel. It is clearly appropriate for the airport operators to take into account those forecasts. In the past few years, the proportion of United Kingdom passengers travelling from London has decreased as a proportion of total United Kingdom passengers. That reflects the ability of regional airports to attract viable direct services. It is a good thing. It enables regional travellers to achieve shorter journey times and frees up capacity in the London area, as my hon. Friend suggested.

Clearly, an assessment will need to be made of future demand at Heathrow, but there is no sign—that should be underlined to my hon. Friend—that demand for the London airport system will not continue to grow for some time to come. That demand will need to be met.

Following consultation with the local authorities, BAA submitted a planning application for the fifth terminal in the spring of last year. The application has been called in by the Secretary of State for the Environment, which is the right way to proceed. The proposal will now go to a public inquiry, where all the issues of national and local significance can be assessed and discussed. The inspector will form a view, taking account of all the evidence that has been presented, and he will then duly report. It will be for the Secretaries of State for Transport and for the Environment, jointly, to make a decision on the application, based on the inspector's report.

I know that some people have said that the inquiry process is extremely lengthy. We have recently tightened procedures, but it is only right that all those with views should have a chance to comment on the details openly and transparently, not least my hon. Friend and his constituents. I hope that my hon. Friend will understand that, because of the Secretary of State's quasi-judicial position in relation to the final decision, it would not be right for me to comment on the application, except to say that, of course, we retain an open mind. There can be no question of the outcome of the inquiry having been prejudged by either of my right hon. Friends.

I should like to clarify one point that my hon. Friend raised about surface access. There has been some confusion over the motorway proposals for access and it has been said that they somehow suggest that the Government have made up their mind about the planning inquiry. As I have already said, that is not the case. As a result of BAA's application for a fifth terminal, the Highways Agency is obviously promoting motorway schemes to provide adequate access. Those involve the provision of a dual carriageway spur road of motorway standard from terminal 5 to the proposed M25 link roads north of junction 14 at Poyle and improvements to the M4 between junctions 3 and 4B.

The spur and M4 improvements will be necessary only if terminal 5 receives planning consent. As those schemes are contingent on the development of terminal 5, BAA would, if those schemes go ahead, make a substantial contribution to the costs of preparation and construction. That is standard practice where a road scheme is being promoted to provide access to a development and where such a scheme would not otherwise be provided at that time.

The public inquiry into the planning application for terminal 5 will consider the access proposals. It is only right that they should be put forward for consideration and debate at the same time. My Department held a public consultation in September and October of last year and, in view of the public response to the M4 improvement

[Mr. Steve Norris]

proposals at junction 4 and to the west of it, the Highways Agency is currently reassessing other options: It hopes to make an announcement in the summer.

My hon. Friend who raised the issue of the third runway and runway capacity in the south-east working party, RUCATSE. I appreciate that it is an extremely important issue for my hon. Friend. It is only right that I clarify some of the background to the study for his benefit and that of the House.

In 1988, the Civil Aviation Authority was asked by the then Secretary of State for Transport to look at the adequacy of runway capacity in the south-east. That advice was submitted in the document known as CAP 570 and it had three strands. There was forecast to be a need for a new runway's worth of capacity around the turn of the century. Several sites were identified that seemed technically feasible for meeting that demand, including Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted, and that made full use of Luton's existing runway. A number of smaller options at more remote sites were also considered. Finally, the authority considered that, as I have already mentioned, although regional traffic would grow faster than in the south-east, capacity in the regions was unlikely to be a substitute for new capacity in the south-east.

To take that forward, the RUCATSE working group was set up to examine the CAP 570 options from a wider perspective and identify the benefits and the impacts that would flow from development at each site. I know that some think that this should not have been done in the case of Heathrow, but given that the CAA had identified Heathrow as being technically feasible, it was only right that it should be considered as part of that process.

To get as wide a viewpoint as possible, the RUCATSE working group included not only representatives from Government and the airports and the airlines, but local interest groups from the areas that might be affected by the various options. That report was published in July last year and it concluded that only the existing London airports would be able to cater for substantial amounts of traffic. It agreed with the CAA that regional airports were not a substitute for south-east capacity. However, most importantly for the purposes of today's debate, RUCATSE gave the fullest assessment of the consequences of developing further runway capacity at the four main London area airports.

There are considerable impacts at each site, which the report fully sets out—the effects on designated land, demolition, including listed buildings, and one must not forget the noise impact that would arise from the additional traffic. Against those must be set the considerable economic benefits that would accrue as a result of any development and it would be wrong to overlook those.

In summary, the impacts of a third runway at Heathrow would, as my hon. Friend said, be the greatest of all the sites that were contemplated. The scales of impacts of new runways at Gatwick and Stansted would be equal in noise and environmental terms, but overall I do not think that it is a matter of dispute that the Heathrow option would have the most serious impact.

Our aim in the process has been to gather as much information as possible so that we can enable the most appropriate strategy to be adopted. The RUCATSE process has not been easy for those people potentially affected, so it is important to understand that none of the options considered are proposals. My hon. Friend was right to make that clear and I can understand why he was so forceful in putting that point across. Those were indicative options to give some assessment of the impact of development at each site and they do not represent planning proposals. I can say to my hon. Friend and to the House that there is no question of any development proceeding without going through statutory procedures.

We are now undertaking a thorough consultation exercise on the basis of the RUCATSE report. That will end on 31 May. I am acutely aware, and I am frequently reminded in correspondence and by colleagues, of the view that exercises of that type create difficulty for people attempting to move house. The Government will therefore act speedily to reduce the uncertainty for all those affected, as my hon. Friend requested. We shall take account of all the views that we have received and we aim to produce our responses before the end of the year.

I appreciate that there are people who would like us to reach a firm view today, but it would be inappropriate for the Secretary of State to prejudge the outcome of the consultation and the consultation must therefore run its course. I can assure the House, and especially my hon. Friend, that all efforts will be made to resolve the matters as soon as we can.

Mr. Dicks: Will it be possible for a statement to be made before the summer recess? To put my constituents through—one hopes that it will be for all of us—a long, hot summer, of uncertainty, discontent and further blight is too much to ask and too much to expect of them.

Mr. Norris: Any person involved in the planning of large projects—in the past couple of years, I have been involved in some of the largest that we have undertaken—is aware that one of the most insidious consequences of those proposals is the creation of informal blight. That is to say that the minute that a proposal is mentioned it, not unnaturally, has an impact on the local area, which can have very real impacts on individuals who, for a specific reason, need, for example, to sell their homes where there is no statutory arrangement available to them to compensate them as eventually there would be if a proposal became a substantive application and was approved on inquiry and embarked on.

Therefore, I fully understand the argument that my hon. Friend makes. He urges me to make a decision on those matters before the summer recess. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be crucially involved with the decision, and I hope that my hon. Friend will allow me to let matters rest at that point. We shall bear in mind very carefully the forceful argument that my hon. Friend made about the desirability of ending informal blight wherever it is needless. I hope that he will merely allow me to say that those are important and far-reaching matters.

We are discussing the development of our airport strategy, the implications of which will stretch far into the next century. It would be wrong to arrive at a decision speedily which was of a lesser quality than a sensible decision taken after proper deliberation. I shall bear in mind the observation that my hon. Friend has made.

This has been a useful debate. I have no doubt that we shall return to similar debates in future. Heathrow is a huge national asset and a great success story, but a business of that size inevitably brings problems that we cannot sweep

under the carpet—we must find solutions. I hope that what I have said today will give confidence to those involved and to my hon. Friend that we are actively tackling the problems.

The public inquiry into the proposed fifth terminal will conduct a thorough investigation of that proposal before the inspector comes forward with his recommendation. The Government's response to the RUCATSE report is a separate matter, but one in which we will examine all the evidence before we make any recommendation. We are aware of the concern that the subject has aroused, not just at Heathrow, but at Gatwick, Stansted and Luton. We shall consider all responses thoroughly and reach our conclusions before the end of the year.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Three o'clock till Tuesday 3 May, pursuant to the Resolution [17 March].

House of Commons

Tuesday 3 May 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

ROYAL ASSENT

Madam Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

Finance Act 1994.

Race Relations (Remedies) Act 1994.

Road Traffic Regulation (Special Events) Act 1994.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION

Special Educational Needs

1. **Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to improve the resources available for children with special educational needs.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Eric Forth): It is for local education authorities and schools to determine how much money is allocated to special educational needs, within totals which are adequate for the provision of the education service as a whole. Part III of the Education Act 1993 and the draft code of practice, which the House is due to debate shortly, will help schools and local education authorities to manage their responsibilities for children with special educational needs more effectively.

Dr. Jones: I welcome the draft code of practice on special educational needs, but not the dismissive attitude of the Minister, who belongs to a Government who fetter local authorities' discretion. Will the Minister give the commitment that adequate resources will be made available to allow children with special educational needs to receive their entitlement to obtain the education that they need in the time scale laid down by the code? In that regard, will he congratulate Birmingham city council, which has substantially increased its education budget under the new leadership so that it is now well in excess of the Government's standard spending assessment, and in particular the additional—

Madam Speaker: Order. We are getting off to a bad start today. I have cautioned both sides of the House that I want brisk questions. I am entitled to ask the Minister to answer only the first question if hon. Members continue in the same way as the hon. Lady.

Dr. Jones: I was just getting to the point of the additional money—the £2,000 per school—

Madam Speaker: Order. This will not do. I call the Minister.

Mr. Forth: I am aware of no fettering of local education authorities' discretion. The hon. Lady seems to have ignored the 1992 report from the Audit Commission and Her Majesty's inspectorate, which said nothing about more money but concentrated on the lack of clarity and responsibility shown by many local education authorities and schools, not least Birmingham, to which the hon. Lady referred. In answer to her question, if Birmingham is belatedly catching up after years of neglect of education, I welcome that.

Mr. Waterson: Does my hon. Friend agree that many parents welcome the new rights contained in the Education Act 1993, in particular their new rights of appeal and the imposition of a time limit within which a child's needs have to be assessed by the local education authority?

Mr. Forth: Yes, I am grateful to my hon. Friend for highlighting that matter. It is an issue which concerned my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, the Minister of State and me when we arrived at the Department two glorious years ago. The code of practice that the House will consider shortly states that the disgraceful time delay in providing statements on children will no longer be acceptable. I am convinced that, in raising the quality of response of everyone to that which already exists among the best, we shall be doing a service to children with special educational needs and their parents. That provision, backed by the tribunal, will make a dramatic change in the quality of special needs provision.

Mature Students

2. **Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received regarding the treatment of the over-50s by the student maintenance funding system.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Tim Boswell): My right hon. Friend has received a very small number of representations on this subject.

Mr. Ainsworth: Is the Minister aware that there are 5,400 students in further education over the age of 50 who are not entitled to loans, so cannot make up the 10 per cent. cuts in grant imposed since they started their courses? The cost involved would be a mere £2 million. Will the Minister allow grants for those 5,400 people so that they can carry on under the financial regime that they expected when they undertook their courses?

Mr. Boswell: I am sorry to disappoint the hon. Gentleman, who has written to me on the subject. No such measure was proposed or carried into effect when we made the shift from grants to include a provision of loans in 1990. If we had £2 million to spare, that might not be the best use of public funds. I refer those students in difficulties to the access funds for their universities and institutions that are designed precisely to meet such hardship.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I am sure that my hon. Friend will be most interested to know of one of my constituents who was made unemployed and who decided, with his wife, that he could manage to see himself through university—

Madam Speaker: Order. Please ask a question.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I am asking my hon. Friend whether he is be pleased to know.

Madam Speaker: I am sure that the Minister is delighted to know, but he should now hear a direct question that needs to be answered.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Is my hon. Friend the Minister aware that my constituent managed to get £800 from the access fund and has been able to continue with his studies? He is delighted with the treatment that he has received.

Mr. Boswell: I am delighted to hear that from my hon. Friend. It is an example of what can and has been done. We now have more mature students in higher education than ever before. The rate has been increasing faster than for more traditional students. We welcome that—we want it to continue.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Is the Minister aware that one of the biggest disincentives to mature students is the collapse of discretionary grants? Can he now tell the House clearly what action he intends to take against authorities, such as Conservative-controlled Trafford, that have abolished discretionary grants?

Mr. Boswell: It is interesting that the hon. Gentleman has managed to mix up discretionary awards and discretionary grants and to bring what is primarily but not exclusively a further education consideration into a question about higher education and mandatory awards. We have studied, and we are continuing to study, the recent report of the Gulbenkian Foundation. It is interesting that the hon. Gentleman blames Trafford. Perhaps he would also consider those Labour-controlled authorities that have withdrawn the discretionary grants as well. We shall look at the overall position. When we have reached our conclusions, we shall tell the House about them.

Special Educational Needs

3. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what estimate he has made of the number of educational psychologists required by local education authorities to ensure that all statements for children with special educational needs are completed within six months.

Mr. Forth: The draft code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs, which the House is due to debate shortly, recognises the key role of educational psychologists, whose number has increased by over 30 per cent. in the past 10 years. Extensive consultation and the work of the Audit Commission shows that local education authorities should be able to make statements within six months within existing provision.

Mr. Callaghan: I thank the Minister for his reply, but point out to him that of the 120 places available each year for educational psychologists, 52 retired from their job in 1992 and 70 places were unfilled last year. As it is children with special needs who suffer, could he tell the House exactly what he will do to remedy the situation?

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman raises a relevant and difficult matter, which we are monitoring closely. We are satisfied that support for educational psychologists' training, which is running at about £3.5 million for the current year, is, and should be, sufficient to enable local education authorities to fulfil their statutory responsibilities in this sector. However, if anyone can come up with a satisfactory alternative approach to the matter, I will look at it closely. There is no overall agreement on the best way to tackle the problem. At present, I am satisfied that we have the best solution, but I am very much open to suggestions.

Mr. Butler: I congratulate the Minister on the efforts that have been put into speeding up and completing statementing. However, is not what is important not only the completion of statementing on time but the completion of a statement with a specific recommendation? Will he join me in deploring the trend towards generic statementing—simply saying at the end that a pupil requires additional help within the classroom—rather than specific statementing, recommending a school and setting targets?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend has correctly identified a problem that existed until now—that is, an extreme variability in both the content and value of the statements provided. The code of practice will bring a new uniformity and standardisation to the statements, which will be of great benefit. That, backed by the extensive powers that we are giving to the special educational needs tribunal, will give parents new rights, real rights and powerful rights to pursue the needs of their children. That will be a great advance.

Mr. Win Griffiths: While the Minister has said some positive things in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Heywood and Middleton (Mr. Callaghan) about being willing to seek advice elsewhere, may I remind him that the number of vacancies has increased from 42 at the end of 1991 to an estimated 70 last year, and that that is happening at a time when local education authorities are advertising for more educational psychologists to provide a better service to children with special educational needs? If he is willing to accept advice from that sphere, will he turn to local education authorities, to the Association of Educational Psychologists and to the British Psychological Society because I can assure the Minister that they want something better than the present system? Let us have it.

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman is always entitled to ask for something better, but I am not convinced that there is broad agreement, even among those whom he has mentioned, about what that something better may be. I do not think that the lack of money is a problem, since the take-up, or lack of it, shows that the money is simply not being spent. Therefore, we have to look elsewhere for the solution. I repeat that if anyone can come to me with an agreed, workable and practicable approach, I shall certainly look positively at it.

Parenthood And Good Housekeeping

4. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his policy on the teaching of parenthood and good housekeeping.

The Secretary of State for Education (Mr. John Patten): Schools should reinforce parents in preparing pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. Those are important topics. Aspects of

them are included in some national curriculum subjects and in sex education. Schools may also cover them in other programmes such as personal and social education.

Mr. Atkinson: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the growing concern among primary school teachers that they are increasingly experiencing difficulty in the classroom in coping with the products of bad parenthood and bad housekeeping? In the context of my right hon. Friend's reply, can he assure me that the new revised national curriculum for secondary schools addresses that situation?

Mr. Patten: The national curriculum—for example, in science education—already looks at exactly that. One of the main aims of the revised national curriculum, details of which will be announced in a week or 10 days, is more time for teachers—up to about 20 per cent. a week more—to devote to personal and social education. It is wrong to try to load too much on the shoulders of teachers when the burden should rightly lie on the shoulders of parents.

Ms Eagle: Does the Secretary of State agree that part of the teaching of good parenthood is good sex education? Can he explain the extraordinary implications of his view that children should be streamed for sex education? How does he propose that teachers should put individual pupils into different streams? Has he never heard of what goes on behind the bicycle shed?

Mr. Patten: Those stories are without foundation. I am sure that from time to time all hon. Members read stories that deserve to be taken outside to the yard and shot. That story needs to be taken outside and put in front of a firing squad.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that what goes on behind the bicycle shed is nothing new and that personal relationships and good housekeeping are best taught at the age of about 13 and 14? Does he further agree that sex education is not assisted when pupils are taught how to have sex as a means of discouraging them from having it? That false argument has been advanced by the Brooke Advisory Centres and others for too long and they have got away with it.

Mr. Patten: Bicycle sheds may be matters for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, but the second part of my hon. Friend's question is certainly for me. We wish to see good, sensible sex education that is taught with sensitivity by hard-working teachers. I am grateful to teachers for the way in which they carry out that task. The House will shortly have a chance to see the guidelines when they are published in the circular and will see that much of the speculation which seems to have run riot in the short, silly season that we have just had in the national media is completely without foundation.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Has the Secretary of State studied the evidence from other European countries which clearly shows that if our children are given good-quality sex education that is appropriate to their age and understanding, it is likely to help them in the long term, and will help them to avoid teenage pregnancies and early sexual activity? Why is the Secretary of State fanning silly season stories by ridiculous comments which ignore all the evidence?

Mr. Patten: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and I have been working closely together on those issues for some months and the results will be seen when the circular is published. After all, the draft circular has been out for some months. It is important for me to tell the House, in answer to the hon. Lady's question, that we had about 400 responses to the draft sex education circular and, almost without exception, every respondent welcomed the fact that it set sex education in a firm framework of family value.

Dr. Spink: Will my right hon. Friend confirm the value of schools teaching today's youngsters that the prime responsibility for the education of children lies with their parents and not with the state, because today's parents have forgotten that fact?

Mr. Patten: I agree entirely. The prime responsibility for bringing up children lies with the parents of those children throughout their childhood.

Educational Exports

6. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the latest figure he has of the value to the British economy of educational exports.

Mr. Boswell: Educational exports include both visible exports, including books, equipment and construction, and invisible exports, such as consultancy fees and the fees and other expenditure of overseas students in the United Kingdom. It has been estimated that educational exports already contribute around 4 per cent. to British invisible earnings alone. We wish to develop further all kinds of educational exports.

Mr. Evans: I am extremely grateful for that reply. Next time my hon. Friend visits my constituency, will he accompany me to visit two schools in my constituency? Stoneyhurst college and Moorlands school are both fine institutions offering educational support to youngsters from all over the world. Does he agree that such support is important not just for its educational value to the youngsters and the financial gain to Britain but because many of those youngsters, when they return to their own countries, become involved in the higher echelons of business and the top echelons of Government?

Mr. Boswell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is entirely on the right point and I will do my best to accept his kind invitation to visit those schools. I agree that the investment that we make in importing students from overseas into our schools and higher and further educational institutions is of considerable value to us in terms of our future relations with the countries to which they return.

Mr. Bryan Davies: On his recent visit to Malaysia and Singapore, did not the Secretary of State assist the Government of Singapore in reaching 80 per cent. of young people in higher education, while being complacent about the fact that only 30 per cent. of youngsters in Britain get the same opportunities?

Mr. Boswell: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for one thing: that he recognised my right hon. Friend's admirable and successful visit to Malaysia and Singapore, which was of great value in promoting British educational exports. However, he does us a characteristic disservice in suggesting that there is something wrong with the attainments of British higher education. If he were to look

at the details and compare like with like, he would find that the proportion of young people going into higher education as we know it in Singapore is very much smaller—in the order of a magnitude smaller. Malaysia and Singapore very much want to collaborate with us in improving their higher education delivery and spreading good British educational practice throughout the region.

Mrs. Gillan: Will my hon. Friend take the opportunity to congratulate an excellent university in my county—Buckingham university—which won the Queen's award for export in the last round of awards? Not only is it our only independent university but it is doing sterling work in pioneering the two-year degree.

Mr. Boswell: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for her comments. I have been aware of, and associated with, the university of Buckingham for many years, and while I must and do maintain a proper distinction between universities, I am aware of its achievement and the example that it has set in all the sectors of which she has reminded the House.

Chemistry

7. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the standard of chemistry teaching in state schools.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Mr. Robin Squire): Her Majesty's inspectors report that the quality of science teaching generally for pupils up to age 16 is satisfactory or better in 80 per cent. of lessons. Standards of chemistry teaching post-16 are satisfactory or better in 90 per cent. of lessons. Those are good standards, and science teachers are to be congratulated.

Mrs. Campbell: Will the Minister join me in congratulating Parkside community college in Cambridge on winning the Royal Society of Chemistry's national award despite fierce competition from many public schools? Is he further aware that Parkside community college is a local education authority-maintained school which has positively chosen to stay with the LEA?

Mr. Squire: On the first part of the hon. Lady's question, I have no reluctance at all in joining her, and I extend full congratulations to all schools that are doing so much to raise standards in this sphere. On the latter part, I hesitate to join her. I should be happier if at this stage the majority of schools had given parents the opportunity to vote.

Mr. Whittingdale: On behalf of the Philip Morant school in Colchester, I thank my hon. Friend for the grant that his Department has given to finance the construction of the brand new chemistry laboratories which I opened on Friday. Does he agree that his announcement last week that the Philip Morant school is to become a technology college will allow that school to improve still further its already excellent reputation for chemistry and science?

Mr. Squire: I am delighted to echo my hon. Friend's congratulations to that school. He is right also to highlight the fact that across, the country, the technology college initiative will transform the way in which science, maths and technology are taught. It will improve the quality of education for so many of our pupils and it would be nice to see support for it coming from Opposition Members.

School Discipline

8. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps his Department is taking to assist teachers in maintaining an orderly environment in their schools.

11. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to help improve levels of discipline in schools.

Mr. Forth: Children will not be able to learn unless in a disciplined environment. Head teachers are responsible for maintaining discipline in their schools. To help them, my Department has prepared guidance on behaviour and discipline, issued for consultation in January. Revised guidance will be issued later this term. Children will not grow up to be good citizens unless they are taught self-discipline.

Mr. Coombs: I welcome the Government's recent initiatives on truancy and the circular that the Minister has just mentioned, both of which emphasise that an orderly environment in school is crucial for high standards of education. Will my hon. Friend recognise the important work done by St. Paul's school in the middle of Birmingham, which takes disruptive pupils and which has now produced results which are among the highest of any school in Birmingham? Will he support its soon-to-be-announced application for grant-maintained status?

Mr. Forth: Fortunately for me, it is not within my gift to consider such an application, but I am sure that the Under-Secretary, my hon. friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), has heard what my hon. Friend has had to say. However, my hon. Friend says something important that we must not forget or lose sight of, and that is that the best schools can demonstrate very well that, with the right management and policies and the right participation by governors, parents, heads and teachers, good discpline is perfectly achievable in today's schools even if they are in difficult areas and with potentially difficult pupils. It is precisely to assist in raising everybody to the standard of the best that we are issuing guidance and circulars, which we hope will be helpful to heads, governors and teachers.

Mr. Paice: Does my hon. Friend accept that, whatever proposals he or his Department may have, unless children are brought up to respect the rule of law and authority they will get nowhere, and that that respect will be gained partly by the example that they see set by their parents and teachers? Will he join me in condemning the fact that the National Union of Teachers has decided to flout the rule of the House yet again, and express amazement that the continuation of the boycott by the NUT has not been condemned by the Opposition?

Mr. Forth: It was interesting that, recently, when the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) was asked a direct question about that, she said that she neither supported nor condemned the action of the NUT, from which we shall all have to draw our own conclusions. The hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) said something

quite different in the House last week. I shall leave it to them to sort out between themselves what the Labour party's policy is.

My hon. Friend makes a crucial point. In the circular that I hope to issue shortly the section entitled "Partnership with Parents" states the self-evident—that parents have a powerful effect on children's behaviour. Without the active co-operation of parents, we cannot expect heads and teachers alone to do the vital job of bringing up young people properly to respect one another and to respect the law and society. Until we get that co-operation from parents, it will be an uphill struggle.

Mr. Pickthall: Does the Minister agree that increasing disorder is being created in many schools by people intruding into the premises during the day or in the evening? I refer not just to headline cases of appalling tragedies but day-by-day intrusions by young or adult outsiders, which make the lives of schools a misery. What consultation has the Minister undertaken and what action will he take, perhaps in conjunction with the Home Secretary, to help schools in those circumstances?

Mr. Forth: We are working closely with colleagues in the Home Office, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education hopes to issue guidance on liaison between police and schools, to cover exactly the points made by the hon. Gentleman. We are conscious of the difficulty to which he refers. We are giving schools as much support as possible, directly and through local education authorities, in providing enhanced security—particularly in out-of-school hours. We must all take our lead from the courageous and statesmanlike response by the chairman of governors and head teacher in the context of a recent tragedy, who emphasised that we cannot and must not make our schools fortresses or forbidding places. They must be places that welcome pupils, parents and those of good will. We are trying to encourage that.

Mr. Foulkes: Is it not also important to maintain an orderly environment and discipline among Conservative Members—particularly the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans)? I am happy for the Secretary of State to remain in the Cabinet until he is replaced by my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor).

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend is happy to accept the hon. Gentleman's endorsement.

Mr. Rowe: Will my hon. Friend congratulate All Saints primary school in Chatham, which today celebrates its 100th anniversary? That Church of England school has made welcome children from many ethnic minorities based on a Christian ethic, and it maintains a remarkably high standard of discipline.

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend, typically, gives a positive example of that which can be achieved by a school adopting a positive attitude. Co-operation between the head teacher, governors, teaching staff, parents and society demonstrate how well things can be done in schools when everyone is pointed in the right direction. We are determined to support that.

Nursery Education

9. Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many nursery places for three and four-year-olds are available in Nottinghamshire, the east midlands and England.

Mr. Robin Squire : The Department does not collect information about the number of places available. The number of children in maintained nursery schools and nursery classes in maintained primary schools in England as at January 1993 was 339,914. The comparable figures for Nottinghamshire local education authority and for the east midlands were 13,498 and 32,721 respectively.

Mr. Tipping: Will the Minister congratulate Labour-controlled Nottinghamshire county council on providing more nursery places than any other county? Will he extend his congratulations to Labour-controlled cities such as Leeds and Birmingham? Will he also remind parents that children have three times more chance of a nursery place under a Labour council than under a Tory council?

Mr. Squire: The hon. Gentleman talks nonsense in trying to make a party political point out of nursery provision. If he wants to enter that debate, I can quote Conservative-controlled councils that also—

Mr. Jamieson: Name just one.

Mr. Squire: They have been quoted across the Chamber before. What is important is that all LEAs should take seriously their responsibilities for under-fives provision—not just nursery schools or classes but the whole range of likely provision. The Government are currently examining proposals to enhance that, as and when we have the resources.

Mr. Lidington: Is my hon. Friend aware that by prudent financial management, Buckinghamshire county council is this year financing significant expansion of nursery education in Aylesbury and elsewhere, without piling up huge debts that local people would have to repay in the future? Does not that demonstrate again that local government in Buckinghamshire sets a standard of excellence that the rest of the country could do well to copy?

Mr. Squire: I am delighted to hear my hon. Friend's comments about Buckinghamshire, which I endorse. There are other Conservative councils—Ealing and Wandsworth come to mind, both of which offer significant nursery provision.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Does the Minister acknowledge that the figures that my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) quoted were based on answers to parliamentary questions that were given by Ministers in his Department, and that his Department's figures show that the children of parents who live in a Labour council area have three times the chance of a nursery place that they have if they live in a Conservative area? How does the Minister answer the leaflet that is produced by the Conservatives in Bromley—who provide only 2 per cent. of children with nursery education—and says that Bromley Conservative council will implement nursery education for all children when the Government release the necessary finance?

Mr. Squire: Who would have guessed that elections were in the offing? Until the hon. Lady can clarify the Labour party's commitment, comparing what she says with what has been said by her hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), the Opposition Treasury spokesman—who said that there are no spending commitments at the present time—we do not have any lessons to learn from her on the provision of nursery places.

Mr. Brandreth: Can my hon. Friend confirm that, over the past 15 years, there has been a remarkable growth in pre-school provision, so that, today, some 90 per cent. of three and four-year-olds enjoy pre-school provision of some kind, ranging from nursery education to pre-school play groups? Will he particularly salute the recent 35 per cent. increase in the grant to the Pre-School Play Groups Association, which does such valuable work throughout the country and particularly in the city of Chester?

Mr. Squire: I confirm all of my hon. Friend's figures. He underlines the fact that the biggest providers at the present time are play groups; and well-resourced play groups make a significant contribution to bringing up under-fives.

Parent-Teacher Opinions

10. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of his time he has been able to devote this year to meeting parents and teachers in order to gauge their views on educational developments.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend and his ministerial team have visited 50 schools, and have received at least as many delegations, including a number from teachers, parents, and their representative associations.

Mr. Mackinlay: When listening to parents, does the Secretary of State have regard to the legitimate expectation of parents that their children shall be taught by qualified school teachers? Will he review the decision to experiment with so-called "specialist teaching assistants", who are not qualified and simply do not have the skills to teach our children the key stage 1 basics of the national curriculum? Is not that education on the cheap and a great deception of parents?

Mr. Forth: No. I cannot recall offhand any of the delegations whom I have met—or the teachers in the staff rooms that I have visited—raising that particular question. I can recall that parents show an interest in the educational outcomes of the education process. They are concerned that their pupils are taught well and in an appropriate environment, and in that we support them. Everything that I and my colleagues in the ministerial team do is aimed in that direction. The hon. Gentleman would do better to concentrate on the outcome of the education process rather than on its input.

Mr. Congdon: Does my hon. Friend agree that, since the early 1960s, too much time has been spent listening to education theorists and not enough on listening to the views of parents? What parents want, particularly those who send their children to primary schools, is to ensure that their children get a good and firm grounding in the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic.

Mr. Forth: Yes. My hon. Friend reflects the anger and frustration that are often felt at the domination of education over the past two or three decades by boffins and egg-heads. When he stays, as I know that he will, to hear the speech by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on the Second Reading of the Education Bill, he will find that what he has to say is greatly to his satisfaction.

Mr. Don Foster: Given the Minister's stress on the importance of links between parents and schools, is he aware of the recent National Consumer Council report on that matter which criticises the Government's market approach to education, saying that it

"precludes concepts of partnership and co-operation between home and school"?

Does he believe that it was the following of the Government's divisive approaches that led the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) to call for the sacking of his right hon. Friend?

Mr. Forth: The example that the hon. Gentleman gave pays tribute to the broadmindedness of the Government, who are prepared to fund that council with a considerable amount of taxpayers' money and give it the freedom to report in the way that it has. We will, of course, study its report with great care to see in what ways its conclusions are relevant and useful, and how—if at all—we can meet its requirements.

Mr. Dunn: Is the Minister aware that if he were to visit the county of Kent, he would discover that parents and teachers strongly support the Government's education policies, but give very little support to the policies of our county council, which is controlled by Labour and the Liberal Democrats and which seeks to destroy all choice in Kent?

Mr. Forth: I suspect that my hon. Friend, with his deep and intimate knowledge of the wishes and desires of those in his constituency and in Kent as a whole, has put his finger on the degree of frustration felt in the county by those who voted in the way that they did last year for a certain set of reasons, and are now rather appalled at the outcome in terms of education. I hope that that has taught a lesson to many people up and down the country.

Mr. Hardy: If people give the Government advice that the Government do not like, will the Minister ensure that a rather more gracious approach is adopted than that of the Minister of State? On learning the result of a vote on opting out in my area—80 per cent. voted in favour of good sense—the right hon. and noble Lady decided that Members of Parliament were responsible; she appeared to deplore our exercise of a democratic responsibility that we are rather more entitled to exercise than anyone in the other place.

Mr. Forth: There are no known limits to the graciousness of my right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Blatch.

School Sports

12. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to increase the provision of team and individual sports in schools.

18. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his policy concerning competitive sports in schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: Competitive sports are an important part of a balanced physical education curriculum. With the PE national curriculum, for the first time, games are mandatory for all pupils aged five to 14, and an option for those aged 14 to 16. We shall be looking to strengthen further the position of sports in schools as part of the current review of the national curriculum.

Lady Olga Maitland: I thank my hon. Friend for his commitment to sport in schools. Is he aware that the decline of sport in our schools is largely due to teachers who regard sport, in the competitive sense, as elitist and demeaning to pupils? Does he agree that children benefit from competitive sport in learning the skills of leadership, discipline and loyalty?

Mr. Squire: I agree with my hon. Friend. I am sure that she, too, will agree that one of the reasons for the introduction of the PE national curriculum was the need to tackle the anti-competitive ethos that grew up during the 1970s. She may be interested to learn that, according to evidence from the Office for Standards in Education, games continue to dominate that curriculum: more than half the PE lessons in secondary schools last year were games lessons.

Mr. Barry Jones: Can the Minister remember the days when he used to play cricket and rugby union, which are now losing out under his Government? May we please have more cash for more teachers and more competitive sport?

Mr. Squire: I am shocked that the hon. Gentleman should overlook the fact that we currently lead the world with our women's cricket and rugby teams. He has written off half the population: I am very worried about that.

Mr. Pawsey: Does my hon. Friend accept that one of the best ways of improving sport in schools is to improve teacher training? Does he agree that one of the best ways of doing that is to ensure that student teachers spend more time training in the classroom? In short, should we not adopt the sort of measures that our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will introduce later this afternoon?

Mr. Squire: My hon. Friend, with his wide knowledge of education matters, has it exactly right. School-centred initial teacher training will be an important arm in raising the quality of teaching in our schools.

Mr. O'Hara: Does the Minister recognise, however, that the decline in school sports has a great deal to do with successive Government policies—starting with the imposition of the 1,265-hour contract, and continuing through the imposition of an over-burdened and discredited national curriculum and the selling of school playing fields?

Mr. Squire: I disagree. I think that the causes are many, but that the heart of the problem lies in teaching attitudes and a curriculum that we look forward to strengthening.

Sixth Forms

13. **Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the Government's current policies with regard to the retention of sixth forms in schools.

Mr. Patten: Wherever possible, we want young people to be able to choose whether to continue their studies in a school sixth form or a college. Where there is demand, therefore, I hope that grant-maintained—*[Interruption.]* It is clearly a popular policy, Madam Speaker. I hope that grant-maintained and voluntary schools and local education authorities will come forward with high-quality proposals in order to add to diversity in choice.

Mr. Llwyd: Does the Minister agree that, welcome as they are, sixth form colleges are not the be all and end all? Where there are secondary schools without sixth forms should not they be allowed to develop them in order to enhance the level and standard of education and, very importantly, the calibre of teachers coming to those schools?

Mr. Patten: I understand that the hon. Gentleman has a particular case in mind at Bala in his constituency. My writ does not run over Offa's dyke, but I understand that the parents of students at that school will shortly begin a ballot about grant-maintained status. I hope that the hon. Gentleman and members of his party will be out there campaigning with the parents to make sure that that happens.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 3 May.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Rev. Martin Smyth: While congratulating Mr. Mandela and Mr. de Klerk on the success of the recent elections, does the Prime Minister share with me praise for the South African people who, in the face of terrorism, came out in such numbers to exercise their vote with enthusiasm and good manners? Is not there a real lesson for any dissident group that it cannot, by terror, overthrow the will of a people dedicated to democratic practice, especially in this nation?

The Prime Minister: I agree very strongly with the hon. Gentleman about that. I think that the democratic elections have been an enormous success for the people of South Africa, for Mr. Mandela and for Mr. de Klerk. I am delighted that we had so many British parliamentary observers there, of which I believe the hon. Gentleman was one. I am delighted also that British personnel and police were able to help with the elections.

I spoke last evening to Mr. Mandela and assured him of our continuing help as his Government carry forward reform and change in South Africa. What has clearly happened in South Africa, as the hon. Gentleman intimated, is that the power of the ballot box has prevailed over force of arms. That should apply everywhere.

Mrs. Peacock: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the very great support in the United Kingdom that there would be for the introduction of identity cards, particularly if the cards could incorporate a photograph and a driving licence?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, I have considerable sympathy with that view. Two examinations are under way at the moment: first, identity cards particularly in so far as social security is concerned; and, secondly, a wider look at the prospect of identity cards more generally. As I have said to the House before, there are some practical difficulties, but we are examining them to see whether they can be overcome.

Mr. John Smith: Does not the Prime Minister think that it is a quite extraordinary situation that, even before the local government election campaign is over, a senior member of the 1922 Committee should demand, on grounds of incompetence, the resignation of the chairman of the Conservative party and the Secretary of State responsible for local government?

The Prime Minister: Unlike the right hon. and learned Gentleman, I have not faced senior members of my party emigrating to New Zealand.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Prime Minister— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must come to order. *[Interruption.]* Why? Because if you are here you must come to order, that is why; otherwise you can leave the Chamber.

Mr. John Smith: But can the Prime Minister tell us why he presides over a Government in which one Cabinet Minister, the Minister of Agriculture, openly condemns Cabinet colleagues for plotting against his leadership? Was she right to do so?

The Prime Minister: The whole Cabinet is completely determined to carry through the programme on which we were elected, and we propose to do so. That means low inflation, less regulation, low interest rates, strong defence, an active foreign policy and moving Europe in our direction. There is complete unity on that matter, much to the dismay of the right hon. and learned Gentleman.

Mr. John Smith: If the whole Cabinet is united, does not the Prime Minister think that he should remind some members occasionally to demonstrate that fact in their public utterances? While Ministers are permitted by the Prime Minister to squabble and plot as they please, is he surprised that public confidence in his Government has almost completely broken down? If he cannot control his own Cabinet, is it any wonder that we doubt whether he can run the country?

The Prime Minister: I must say that the right hon. and learned Gentleman ought perhaps to look more closely at what is said by many members of his own shadow Cabinet and his own party from time to time. What we are in the process of doing is moving this country into a position of the most sustainable growth with low inflation that we have seen in this country for several decades. That will affect to the good the living standards of each and every person in this country and it will be as a result of the policies followed unitedly by this Cabinet.

Mr. Ottaway: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the recent Wellcome Foundation report on sexual attitudes and behaviour revealed that 19 per cent. of Britain's teenagers under the age of 16 were sexually active? Under those circumstances, does he agree that, where such children have been prescribed contraceptives at the discretion of their GP, there might be cases where it is inappropriate to report that fact to the parents?

The Prime Minister: I do not think that anyone condones that sort of activity by under-age children. I think that it is the responsibility not only of parents but of other people in responsible positions to try to put sexual activity in a proper context for young people.

Mr. Beith: Does it remain Government policy that British participation in a single European currency is not ruled out but will be decided by Parliament at a later stage? If so, how can the Prime Minister have a senior Treasury Minister who believes and states that to join a single currency would involve giving up government of the United Kingdom? Have things gone so far that he cannot sack the young pretender?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend has made it clear this morning that he fully supports our policy on a single currency, a policy agreed by the whole Cabinet of which he is a member. So that there need be no misunderstanding anywhere about it, let me tell the right hon. Gentleman what that is. We shall retain the right, confirmed in the opt-out that I negotiated in the Maastricht treaty, to make our own decision on whether to move to a single currency for Europe. That will be the subject of a separate decision by our Parliament here at Westminster if and when that decision needs to be taken, and it will be taken then in the light of our interests and needs. It will not be taken now. My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary has made it clear that he subscribes wholly to this position.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Has my right hon. Friend noted that the councils charging the highest council tax band-for-band are all controlled by the Labour party?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I had heard that, and I also hear the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) shouting at me, "Some £40 less." I am pleased that he shouts that out because in front of me I have a quote from the deputy director of the Institute of Fiscal Studies who said:

"Labour figures are misleading. The average bill may be higher not because of higher charges but because the average house is worth more".

Like for like, the Labour party is charging far more council tax than the Conservative party and so, although not quite so severely, is the Liberal party. However the hon. Member for Blackburn wriggles, that remains the case.

Q2. **Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 3 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Donohoe: Will the Prime Minister take a cursory glance at his own Front Bench and tell the House who he thinks Brutus will be?

The Prime Minister: I think that the hon. Gentleman has mistaken the time of year. We are past March.

Mr. Waterson: Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the fact that, under the national health service,

all patients are treated according to clinical need, irrespective of age? Thus, for example, in Eastbourne the 25 per cent. of the population who are over 65 account for 64 per cent. of the total resources and bed days.

The Prime Minister: I am happy to accept the figures used by my hon. Friend. I am in no doubt not only that people over retirement age are given excellent treatment by the national health service but that they are entitled to that treatment as of right. They are given the best possible treatment and, where appropriate, are referred to specialists to obtain it.

Q3. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 3 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evans: Does the Prime Minister acknowledge that during the current local election campaign he has had a great deal to say about the levels of council tax charged by various local authorities? Is he aware of the fact that if Westminster city council had received the same rate support grant per head of population as the borough of St. Helens it would have been forced to charge £1,079, instead of £245, for a band D property? Will the Prime Minister explain to my constituents how a rate support grant system that throws up such huge disparities is not politically corrupt?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman makes his usual assertion without any real examination of the facts. If he looks at the local authorities that lost a lot of money under the standard spending assessment this year he will find towards the top of the list Wandsworth borough council, which he neglected to mention. If he wants to know why Westminster sets the lowest council tax in England I can tell him that it is because it has tendered out more services than other councils. It saved £11 million on compulsory competitive tendering—equivalent to £110 on the council tax. The tendering of street cleaning is saving £1.8 million per year, yet the council spends more on arts than any other London authority. Those are some of the reasons why Westminster is so efficient and some of the reasons why the council deserves to be re-elected.

Mr. Evans: On a point of order, Madam Speaker; in view of the ineptness of that reply from the Prime Minister I wish to give notice of my intention to raise this issue on the Adjournment at the earliest possible date.

Mr. Streeter: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the International Monetary Fund's recent assessment of the British economy as being one of the few economic bright spots in the world? Is not this in stark contrast to the days, in the 1970s, when the Labour Government had to go, cap in hand, to the IMF to bail them out? What a difference 15 years makes.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right. Not only do we have both inflation and interest rates at historically low levels, but we have exports running at record levels and growth this year running at twice the rate in any other significant European country. This is expected to continue next year. It is a result of the policies that the Conservative Government have followed.

Q4. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 3 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Salmond: May this Bench join in the general celebrations and best wishes for President-elect Mandela and the new South Africa?

Do the Government intend to redeem the Prime Minister's clear pledge of three years ago that the Rosyth naval base would be sustained? Can Scotland have a yes or no answer to that question, and not more waffle?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence made it clear last year that the Rosyth dockyard has a programme of allocated work stretching—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will wait for just a moment. It was made clear by my right hon. and learned Friend that the Rosyth dockyard has a programme of allocated work stretching well into the next century. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman shuts up he will get his answer. So far as the naval base is concerned, I can tell the hon. Gentleman that all defence bases are being examined as part of the defence cost study. Rosyth is being treated on the same basis as other naval bases. The study is continuing, and my right hon. and learned Friend has not yet received proposals.

Mr. Dunn: Given that industrial disputes are at their lowest level for decades, does the Prime Minister agree that the reintroduction of sympathy strikes would cause a nightmare at the workplace?

The Prime Minister: I have no doubt that that is the case. Last year, the sum total of working days lost was about 600,000. In 1979, in one month alone—January, I think—more than 3 million days were lost. There is no doubt of the damage that sympathy strikes would do. Equally, there is no doubt of the damage that would be done if our trade union reforms were repealed, and people were again encouraged to take their disputes on to the streets rather than to some form of satisfactory agreement.

Q5. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 3 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. McFall: Will the Prime Minister take the opportunity to endorse the remarks by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, who said that water in Scotland will never be privatised? In addition, will he give an assurance that value added tax will never be levied on water and sewerage charges in Scotland or anywhere else in the United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: I am interested to hear the hon. Gentleman say that. His party has been running a campaign referring to the privatisation of water in Scotland, yet he has just admitted that water in Scotland has not been privatised. I hope that he will now withdraw everything that he and his colleagues have been saying in recent months. They have been misleading the people of Scotland. The hon. Gentleman knows that Scottish Water is to be restructured into three new public water authorities. I hope that he will now go out and tell that to everyone in Scotland.

Employment Protection (Amendment)

3.31 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose—[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members leave quietly, please? I am sure that the hon. Member can project his voice.

Mr. Banks: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am sure I can.

I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to prevent discrimination in employment against persons solely on grounds that they are overweight.

In historical terms, one of the most sympathetic supporters of such a Bill might have been Julius Caesar, because, according to Shakespeare, Caesar liked fat men. In act I, scene II of "Julius Caesar", Shakespeare has him say:

"Let me have men about me that are fat;
Sleek-headed men and such as sleep o'nights;
Yond' Cassius has a lean and hungry look;
He thinks too much: such men are dangerous."

The Prime Minister would do well to heed Caesar's words. Of course, his choice of Parliamentary Private Secretary follows the emperor's formula. Unfortunately, the hon. Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) has left the Chamber, but he is certainly fat and sleek-headed—and no one could accuse him of thinking too much. However, yond' right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) has that lean and hungry look, and probably never stops thinking about leadership. Caesar would certainly have marked him out as a dangerous man—and I suspect that the Prime Minister would tend to agree.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Donohoe) suggested during Prime Minister's questions that, if the Prime Minister could now identify which member of his Cabinet would play Brutus, he might yet avoid having his back turned into a knife rack come the ides of November.

Caesar may have preferred to surround himself with fat people, but many employers in this country are prejudiced against them. There are problems of definition as to what constitutes overweight. Measurement of appropriate size by reference to height lacks precision. At best, it provides only rough estimates. A person's body weight is determined by a number of factors, including genetics, metabolism and dieting history.

Appropriate—that is, attractive—size is usually decided in cultural terms, and women especially are subjected to impossible cultural pressures. If the ideal female shape is deemed to be that of a Naomi Campbell, a Kate Moss or a Stephanie Seymour, clearly the overwhelming majority of the female population will fail the test. Predictably, it is men who provide the definition, and women who are expected to conform to it.

The obsession with being thin, and thinness being equated with attractiveness, seems to be a western phenomenon, and one of fairly recent vintage. In many other societies, being fat is associated with desirability and status. In this country, and in the United States, fat people are often thought of as indisciplined, unappealing, lazy and probably suffering from some psychological problem.

With such pressures on people, is it any wonder that the diet industries on both sides of the Atlantic have become multi-billion dollar businesses? What a con many of those diets are. Tomorrow, 4 May, is International No Diet Day, with a lobby of Parliament among many other activities in Britain and abroad. On such a day, it would be well worth reminding ourselves that about 95 to 98 per cent. of all diets fail over three years. The remarkable thing is that dieters blame themselves for the failure rather than the diet.

The truth is that people in the country are getting fatter, and shapes are changing. It is estimated that about half the male population are overweight, compared with 39 per cent. in 1980. The proportion of overweight women has increased from 32 to 40 per cent. The average Briton today is not only broader, but about 10 mm taller than his or her counterpart of a decade ago.

Some businesses are taking those challenges into account. London Transport has done just that with the design of the new Central line tubes, where seats have an average weight allowance per person of 74 kg, compared with 65 kg seven years ago. For more than a decade, aircraft weight has been calculated using an average of 78 kg for each male passenger and 68 kg for women. Now, British Airways is designing seats that will cope with the broader bottoms and longer legs.

Although airlines may use seat size as part of their positive advertising campaigns—they will say that they can seat larger passengers—it is a different story when it comes to the recruitment of their staff. As part of the background to the issue, I asked my American intern to call Virgin Airways to see what policy it had in respect of size. She told Virgin that she was 5 ft 8 in tall and that she weighed 11 stone, which is a normal size as far as I am concerned.

In response, she was told that, at 5 ft 8 in, she had to weigh in between 8 stone 9 lb and 10 stone 6 lb. When she asked why, the Virgin spokeswoman said that they at Virgin had an image to keep up and that they only liked to hire young, thin men and women. When my intern protested that she was very athletic and in good shape, she was told again that she would have to lose weight. Virgin informed her that, in any case, it only offered a certain size of uniform and that she would not fit into it—[*Laughter.*] It sounds like a laughing matter, but that excuse has been used before. For example, Berni Inns was taken to the Equal Opportunities Commission for adopting a similar stand by introducing a maximum uniform size. Berni Inns has dropped that policy, but such discriminatory practices are clearly in evidence in industry. There have been a number of other cases when jobs have been refused to people who are considered overweight, such as in the national health service and by British Rail. Another recent case occurred when a couple in South Glamorgan were rejected as foster parents because of their size.

Although employers rarely admit it, fat people are often passed over for more attractive, thinner people. Employers come up with a number of reasons why they should take thinner people. They say that it is because of the demands of the job or because it is a health matter. However, there is definitely a hidden agenda. Fat people are considered to be unattractive, and employers want to avoid employing them whenever they can.

While it is considered entirely appropriate to have legislation against discrimination on the grounds of race and sex, there are no laws dealing explicitly with the rights of employers to discriminate on the basis of looks. What protection there is comes under the anti-race, anti-sex

discrimination laws. Most jobs that lay down maximum size are wrong to do so and, in many cases, such size discrimination is entirely unjustified.

Of course, the trouble is that many of those who are discriminated against are loth to complain, which adds to the problem of there being no specific legislation on the statute book to protect them. My Bill would plug the gap. Personally, I like voluptuousness. Dawn French did a splendid programme on "The South Bank Show" recently, extolling the virtues of Rubenesque women. Most fat people I know are naturally jolly and kind, and are only made unhappy and guilty by what is considered the tyranny of thin people and fashion.

If the Prime Minister thinks about these matters for a bit, he could strike a blow for fat people and do himself a big favour into the bargain. Those he described recently and famously as bastards in his Cabinet—we take them as being the Home Secretary, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the Secretary of State for Wales—are all thin and exceedingly mean men.

The Prime Minister should sack them instantly and promote the likes of the hon. Members for Crawley (Mr. Soames), who is presently the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) and for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens). He should then express his gratitude for the advice by allowing time on the Floor of the House for my Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Tony Banks, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Ms Dawn Primarolo, Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Ms Diane Abbott and Mr. Harry Cohen.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): They are all thin.

Mr. Banks: Perhaps the hon. Lady would like to join us. After all, she qualifies.

Employment Protection (Amendment)

Mr. Tony Banks accordingly presented a Bill to prevent discrimination in employment against persons solely on grounds that they are overweight: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 10 June, and to be printed. [Bill 101.]

Points of Order

3.41 pm

Ms Ann Coffey (Stockport): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I recently tabled a written question to the Secretary of State for Health. I asked her to provide an estimate of the number of children who are placed in unregistrable children's homes. The right hon. Lady's response was that such information was not separately identifiable in figures available centrally. In fact, the information is identifiable in those figures under code 98 of the returns that local authorities are asked to make to the Department of Health.

I could understand the Secretary of State's response if she had included "easily" in her answer, but she merely used "not". The right hon. Lady's answer is a matter of some concern. Many hon. Members are concerned about the placement of children in unregistrable homes, and it is a sensitive issue. I appeal to you, Madam Speaker, to request the Secretary of State to pass the relevant information to the House.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Lady will be aware that I am not responsible for answers given by Ministers. However, those on the Treasury Bench have heard the hon. Lady's point of order, and no doubt it will be passed on to the appropriate quarter.

Orders of the Day

Education Bill [*Lords*]

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Speaker: It will not come as a surprise to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) to hear that I have not selected the amendment standing in his name.

3.42 pm

The Secretary of State for Education (Mr. John Patten): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I approach this debate on the Bill, with its important provisions on teacher training and student affairs, with relish. I welcome every opportunity to take forward the Government's vital programme of education reforms. I particularly welcome this one, coming as it does on the day marking the 15th anniversary of Conservative government, and also the first day of the next 15 years of Conservative government.

I offer Opposition Members a few moments to reflect on a few of their past campaigns, as they think about what to say in this debate. They have campaigned in the past against the national curriculum, local management of schools, performance tables, school tests, school inspections and now, of course, grant-maintained schools. They were all hard-fought battles over proposals which we were told were "unworkable", "unfair" or "unacceptable".

What better evidence could we have of the lack of vision that pervades the Opposition Benches? All these reforms are now becoming accepted parts of the education scene; and there is every evidence that they are doing just what we intended—levering up standards for children in our schools, challenging schools to do better and working together to enlighten parents, pupils and teachers and raise their expectations of what our young can achieve. They help our children to do better and to work harder, as they are—hard work is good for children—helped by hard-working teachers, to whom all of us in the House should be grateful. I certainly am.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that many of Labour's campaigns in the past 15 years have been against the incompetence of successive Secretaries of State for Education? Will he confirm that the average tenure of office of each of those incumbents—all of whose photographs appear in the anteroom to the Secretary of State's offices—is two years? Does he agree that that suggests that our campaigns have been pretty successful in getting rid of Secretaries of State? Does he acknowledge that his time is up?

Mr. Patten: There is a handsome run of photographs—both in black and white and in colour. When I eventually leave my post in a good number of years' time, I think that I shall have a sepia photograph.

Most attitudes towards education were, until recently, essentially producer-driven.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Will my right hon. Friend also confirm that part of the educational scene to which he referred is the unremitting, relentless and consistent opposition of the National Union of Teachers to our reforms? Is it not true that that opposition by the NUT has been consistently endorsed by the Opposition Front-Bench team?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend speaks with great authority as someone who has taken a formidable interest in education in the House since 1979. He had a most distinguished period as a noteworthy reforming Education Minister. He is absolutely right—the NUT has opposed at every twist and turn, and wherever it can, educational reform over the past 15 years.

The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) has also been twisting and turning, and successive people have failed to get her to say publicly whether she is in favour or against present NUT action. She did so most notably a couple of weekends ago, when even Mr. Vincent Hanna, having done his best, could not persuade her to say more than the immortal words that she was neither supporting the NUT nor opposing the NUT.

If the hon. Lady wants me to give way now so that she can explain, I shall do so. I do not think that she wants me to give way so that she can explain her position.

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury) *rose—*

Mr. Patten: I am delighted to see that she does.

Mrs. Taylor: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for giving way, and am happy to help him to delay the start of our discussion of the tatty Bill that we are supposed to be discussing today.

The Secretary of State knows that the NUT action is not the problem—the problem lies in the difficulties created by the Secretary of State with the national curriculum and testing arrangements that are still experimental. If only the Secretary of State would stop to listen and take notice of advisers, the education system in this country would not be in the position that it is in today.

Mr. Patten: We are clearly in murky water. I always give way when my hon. Friends want me to do so. My hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) introduced an important topic that is connected to the standards of teaching and teacher training in this country.

The hon. Member for Dewsbury quite properly declares her sponsorship by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, which supports the present tests that are already being conducted in so many of our schools. All I can divine from what the hon. Lady said—trying to do so is a murky business—is that, despite the fact that the union that supports her in this place supports the tests, she supports the NUT's sporadic boycott of testing. If she wishes to contradict me, I shall give way; if she does not rise to do so, we can only accept that she supports the NUT's action. I shall happily give way to the hon. Lady. She does not seem to want me to do so.

Most attitudes to education were, until recently, essentially producer-driven. They focused on the inputs of money, buildings and numbers of pupils into the education system. We now focus on the outputs—what is produced, and what pupils and teachers achieve in schools. We are establishing a new settlement around the reforms that will be just as lasting as the settlement achieved by the Butler reforms, whose 50th anniversary we are celebrating this week.

There are four important ways in which our reforms have a direct and positive effect on the quality and outcomes of education in this country. First, they increase

the accountability of schools and colleges, vastly extending the information available to teachers, parents, students and others. Secondly, they encourage well-informed choice among a much greater diversity of institutions and courses. Thirdly, they are opening up wider participation in education beyond compulsory schooling.

Finally, they are tackling quality and standards directly through the national curriculum, which gives pupils, parents and teachers clear national benchmarks for performance, and through regular tests of progress leading to rigorous and reliable qualifications at 16 and beyond. Apparently, that is not supported by the hon. Member for Dewsbury, although it is apparently supported by the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths). In a notable debate last Monday, I recall the hon. Gentleman saying that he was amazed by, and concerned about, what he heard at the NUT conference which he attended. He had every reason to be amazed and concerned. I salute his bravery, and his introduction of open government to the Labour Benches.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): Surely the real test of the effectiveness of socialist education must lie in the fact that the 10 worst local education authorities in the country are all Labour-controlled, save for the Liberal Democrats who hold Tower Hamlets, and who are now rated third.

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is absolutely and precisely right, as she always is. I know that she shares my views about teacher training.

Part I of the Bill will help us to bring those four levers to bear in a vital area—improving teacher training. Our reforms—some have criticised us for not starting here 15 years ago—will be driven by the need for higher standards, informed by greater diversity and choice.

In our drive for higher standards, we have always recognised the key role of the teacher. I quote:

"In education, the role of the teacher is central. For every child, high standards of achievement depend on the skill and dedication of individual teachers. It is therefore essential to ensure a continuing supply of high quality entrants to the profession."

I am quoting from the first paragraph of my proposals for the reform of teacher training, which we are considering in the Bill.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East) *rose—*

Mr. Patten: I give way to my hon. Friend with pleasure.

Mr. Beggs: I thank the Secretary of State for giving way. Does he recognise the increasing concern of parents, especially those with children who are perceived to require special education? Can he give an assurance that more teacher training will be directed at enabling teachers to cope better with children who are perceived to suffer from dyslexia?

Mr. Patten: Special educational needs have come a long way with the assent of hon. Members on both sides of the House. I accept the good advice that we have received from both sides of the House since the hon. Gentleman and I first met in Larne when he was the mayor and I was the most junior Minister in the Northern Ireland Office. A lot has happened since those days in the mid-1980s to improve the lot of children, including those with dyslexia. It is fashionable to attack in this place. I congratulate the hon. Gentleman.

I also pay a tribute to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools who, over the past two years, has pioneered the most massive reform in special education and help for children with educational needs.

The success of all our reforms depends on teachers working hard to put them into effect. Current pressures—from essential education reforms and wider social changes—challenge even the best teachers. It is because we care about the profession and its standards that we have brought forward the Bill—to set the seal on a whole raft of improvements now in hand, bringing to an end a programme of legislation that began in 1988, and putting in place the last vital piece of the jigsaw of educational reform.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that teachers and lecturers who teach teachers to teach have been too far removed from the classroom for too long, and have failed intending teachers in a way that the Bill addresses centrally—by relating the training of teachers to those who are currently teaching successfully? Will the Bill not be useful in improving the educational performance of children in future years?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend speaks with the authority of someone who was a distinguished deputy headmaster for a considerable period. For a long time now, people have recognised that what my hon. Friend says is right. Indeed, in the best higher education institutions and universities, that has also been recognised for a long time, and they have been putting it into effect. To borrow a hackneyed phrase, we want to bring the rest up to the standards of the best. Over the past couple of years, much has already been achieved on teacher training.

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): The Secretary of State makes the important point that this is the last piece in the jigsaw, and that he does not intend any new legislation on education. Does he accept that many of us are extremely concerned by the fact that all the preceding legislation has stripped so much power from local government and put it in his hands that he has no need for new legislation?

Mr. Patten: Since 1988, we have been busily engaged in moving power and influence from the hub of the wheel in Whitehall to the rim of the wheel, giving power to parents, individuals, communities and businesses. In that, we have been much helped by teachers and by the new inspection system. I was sorry to learn in the press this morning that in East Anglia, of all places—in Cambridgeshire—the Liberal party is quoted as being totally against OFSTED and the new inspection regime. That was said in an interview, some footsteps of which reached me this morning. I am sure that that causes considerable concern in OFSTED.

In the past two years, we have set out new and rigorous standards for the practice, knowledge and practical skills that all new teachers must have. During that period, we have also ensured that students will have to spend more time in the classroom and less time in the lecture hall. We are taking training closer to the chalk face and out of the ivory silo. New teachers must be ready from day one to meet the new challenges of the classroom.

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge): The Secretary of State has spoken several times about the changes to teacher training in the past two or three years. Does he not think

[Mrs. Anne Campbell]

that it is time to reflect on those changes and see what their effect will be before introducing further legislation to make more changes?

Mr. Patten: The network of changes made since 1988 have to be regarded as dependent on one another, and teacher training reform is the last part of that network of changes.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Has my right hon. Friend any evidence to cast doubt on the competence of teachers when they leave training colleges? For example, what is their competence in teaching reading?

Mr. Patten: We have laid down that primary teachers must spend more time learning to teach the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. OFSTED, the independent schools inspectorate, found that nearly half—46 per cent. to be precise—of all new primary teachers felt ill-prepared to teach reading. That was not an inspection judgment which could be open to dispute, but what new teachers themselves reported. They had spent four years doing a BEd degree or following similar courses and, alas, 46 per cent. of them felt unable to teach reading properly. That sort of thing must be put right urgently. It is not a matter of ideology or politics: we need much better quality control.

We have also increased diversity of courses and providers, most notably by breaking up the old monopoly and allowing groups of schools themselves, if they wish, to take charge of postgraduate teacher training. I stress "postgraduate teacher training". There are now more than 200 postgraduate students on school-centred courses of that kind. Today I announced the approval of six more consortia. Needless to say, some are in Essex, and some are in London and in the midlands. That means that, next year, there will be about 450 students in 15 consortia involving more than 80 schools throughout the country—in inner-city areas as well as leafy suburbs.

I applaud the willingness of schools facing other challenges to face this role. It was schools, such as some in Kent which are already undertaking this sort of postgraduate teacher training, that first persuaded me by sending representatives to tell me that they wanted to do that. That drove this change of policy, which came from the grass roots, from teachers themselves. It was not a bright idea from a think tank or one that was parachuted in from a Whitehall desk.

Those schools do that because they are confident that their staff and pupils, as well as the profession as a whole, will benefit from bringing good professional practice and teacher training even closer together. That is what drives them.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): My right hon. Friend referred to the challenges that schools are facing. Among those challenges is the movement towards the integration of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream education. Does he accept that that development implies an ever higher degree of skill in relation to special needs on the part of all teachers?

Does he correspondingly accept that it is most unlikely that individual schools will be able to devise adequate training programmes, and that it really should remain a requirement that training in special educational needs should be carried out in conjunction with institutions of higher education? If that applies in relation to initial teacher training, it is more emphatically necessary where specialist training is concerned. Will my right hon. Friend reflect on that?

Mr. Patten: Of course I will. My hon. Friend is yet another distinguished previous Under-Secretary of State for Education. He knows a great deal about these issues, and he speaks with notable authority, in his own constituency and elsewhere.

It is absolutely right that we must make sure that young teachers and those of later years, such as those of our age who are entering the profession, get training in the skills they need, whether it is teaching children to read, or in the difficult area of special educational needs where so much has been achieved, as the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) generously recognised.

The Teacher Training Agency will be in a position to accredit courses—that is, give permission for courses to be carried out, whether they are in a higher education institution or a school—only if they meet my published criteria—the criteria of the holder of my office, the Secretary of State for Education. Those criteria must include—this point will obviously be debated in Committee—proper attention to special educational needs.

It is of interest to me to note that those schools or groups of schools which are already carrying out postgraduate teacher training are showing particular interest in the needs of children in that category. I welcome what my hon. Friend has said.

Many of our very recent reforms in teacher education in the past two years have been welcomed. Indeed, their success has been used by some as an argument against any further action, rather as the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) argued in her intervention.

They fail to realise that the Bill will give us a streamlined framework to underpin those reforms. It will also give them added impetus, by bringing together activities now carried out by as many as four different bodies—the Department for Education, the Higher Education Funding Council, the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education and the teaching as a career unit. The last two of those bodies will be abolished under our reforms; there will therefore be a reduction in the number of public bodies involved.

The Teacher Training Agency will be very much more than a funding body. *[Interruption.]* I give way to my new ally from Plaid Cymru, who wants to see grant-maintained schools in Wales.

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): With friends like that, who needs enemies? I wanted to ask particularly about the unit concerned with the promotion of teaching as a career. Will its functions in Wales go to the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales or to the Teacher Training Agency? I very much hope that it is to the former.

Mr. Patten: To the best of my knowledge, it is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, as are all matters over Offa's Dyke, but, as far as I know, it will be going to the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.

The new teacher training authority will be very much more than a funding body. It will take forward policies

across the four areas I mentioned. It will increase accountability by ensuring good public information about all teacher training courses, and it will hold providers to account for their standards, whether they are higher education institutions for undergraduate training or higher education institutions and schools for postgraduate training.

It will increase choice and diversity by funding a range of high-quality providers and courses. It will increase participation by promoting teaching as a career and encouraging new types of courses to attract good candidates from different backgrounds, in particular industry. I would like more men and woman of mature age who have industrial and commercial experience to move into teaching. That is why I welcome very much the approval of the CBI for the proposals in the Bill. It is right behind them, and I understand why.

The teacher training authority will also increase quality in standards by using OFSTED advice to ensure that all courses meet national criteria and use evidence of quality to inform its funding decisions. The courses that produce the best teachers will have the first claim on resources. Therefore, the teacher training authority will be looking not only at whether the courses meet the Secretary of State's criteria, but at whether they represent good value for money, and quite right too. We want good, value-for-money, high-quality courses.

Characteristically unable, as always since 1992, to mount an effective action on the intellectual arguments for the new agency, the Opposition have fallen back on their usual tactic of undisguised scaremongering.

We value the contribution of high-quality higher education courses. The Opposition have attacked on that front, despite the clear assurances and clarifications of my noble Friend the Minister of State, Baroness Blatch, in another place—clarification of our intention to limit schools to providing postgraduate courses only, and clarification that all teacher training courses will be at degree or postgraduate level, all of which we are happy to see on the face of the Bill.

Mr. Harry Greenway: As the Teacher Training Agency will have such an important evaluation responsibility, will my right hon. Friend say a little more than has so far been said, in the other place anyhow, about who will be running it, if he can—or anyway, about how it will be run and what sort of people he thinks will be taking executive decisions?

Mr. Patten: The distinguished chairman and members of the board will be supported by a chief executive and a small administrative staff. They will rely on the advice of the independent inspectorate, OFSTED, which has already commenced a rigorous examination of primary teacher training courses in a number of higher education institutions.

I envisage that, when the Teacher Training Agency is set up and in action, we shall want to compose a domesday book of the standards, or not, of all the teacher training institutions around the country. I do not wish to see any teacher training institution accredited, according to my criteria, to offer teacher training unless it is offering high-quality training at affordable prices, giving good value for money. Therefore, we shall take the opportunity to take a once-for-all look across the board at what is being done in higher education institutions, and I hope that that will be welcomed by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I know that my right hon. Friend is aware—I hope he is—of the strong demand and support for the idea of a staff college for head teachers, deputy heads and other senior teachers. Would it be appropriate for such a college, when it is introduced —I hope that it will be—to be funded through the Teacher Training Agency?

Mr. Patten: I am still considering with my right hon. and hon. Friends in my Department and elsewhere the possibilities of better management training for heads and deputy heads, and aspiring heads and deputy heads. That is important. Such training has not necessarily always been done well enough in the past and when the time is right we shall be making an announcement.

I hope that my hon. Friend will not press me any further this afternoon about that. However, he is welcome to press the hon. Member for Dewsbury. As I understand it, it is becoming fashionable for Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen not to give way to interventions any more. They prefer not to, for fear they may say something that might be construed as a policy commitment that costs money.

It used to be different in the days of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker). We used to have real debates in those days, but not any more. Good luck to my hon. Friend in dealing with the hon. Member for Dewsbury later.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for being so responsive to so many interventions and questions. Before he leaves the point on teacher training, can he give the House a fuller idea of the way in which he intends to strike a balance between too much training being done in institutions of higher education and too much training being done in schools?

My right hon. Friend will be well aware that I have close connections with Kingston university, representatives of which went to see my noble Friend Baroness Blatch about higher education institutions being too much removed from training. That is one end of it. But the other end is that my right hon. Friend will be aware that parents may be alarmed at too many student teachers being brought into schools and children being subjected to too much teaching of teachers going on in front of them.

Mr. Patten: That matter is ultimately for governors to resolve. [Hon Members: "Oh."] That is the fact in law. Both sides of the House must welcome the fact that student teachers of various sorts and at various levels get good practice in the classroom, invariably under the supervision of a master or mentor teacher. That is most important.

It is a good thing for students to go into the lecture room from time to time. It may equally be a good thing for those who lecture to go into the classroom. I have been much impressed by one group of five schools in Kent that are already training postgraduate teachers. They have a good undertaking with the university of Cambridge, no less, to teach some of the things that student teachers must learn —but the university of Cambridge comes to Kent and students from Kent do not go to the university. That is probably a good idea.

[Mr. Patten]

We should not be hidebound by traditional forms of education if, and only if, standards are high enough. The agency will only accredit courses that meet those standards. I hope that my hon. Friend will convey to Kingston university and its distinguished head of the department of education—who happens to be a constituent of mine—my best wishes and those reassurances.

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): How does the Secretary of State envisage the Teacher Training Agency selecting those primary or secondary schools that are able and competent to undertake such training?

Mr. Patten: Individual primary and secondary schools, often in groups, will come forward with proposals. They will be investigated by OFSTED, measured against the Secretary of State's and value-for-money criteria. Then, and only then, will the schools be accredited. Not every school or group of schools will be accredited, just as not every higher education institution will necessarily be accredited just because it is a higher education institution.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Patten: Of course I will give way to the hon. Lady, but thereafter I hope that I shall be able to plod on a bit faster. I have been giving way rather a lot.

Mrs. Taylor: What are the Secretary of State's long-term aims and plans for school-based teacher education? He spoke about schools coming forward with ideas, but surely someone must make overall planning arrangements for the number of places in teacher education. Does the right hon. Gentleman intend to abdicate that responsibility? Will he make no estimate of the number of teachers necessary? Will he leave everything to schools?

Mr. Patten: That is a gauleiter approach to education—that there must be a master plan in Whitehall for absolutely everything. I do not believe in that; I believe in diversity and choice in an evolutionary framework—in exactly the same way that, over the past couple of years, we have seen a massive shift of attention from the lecture room to the classroom under reforms that we have already introduced.

My vision for the future of teacher education is to attract as many high-quality entrants as possible and to retain them, and to provide the highest possible standard of teacher education. The Teacher Training Agency will be there to do that.

I also value the role that schools can play. I want schools that wish to run courses—they will not be forced on any school—to be given that chance, so that postgraduate students can choose from a large number of different providers. Such choice and diversity will encourage high standards. Students will choose, and the agency will fund the best courses, wherever they are provided. No school or group of schools can be forced to do that. It will be a matter of freedom and choice.

The Labour party, as ever, is uncomfortable with the idea of trusting schools or students with greater choice. That aversion to choice lay behind one Opposition amendment that narrowly passed in another place. It certainly did not lead to clarification of the Bill—quite the reverse.

Is it too much to hope that the Opposition will one day table an amendment that actually has the effect that they intended? I am fairly sure that the Opposition meant to provide in the amendments—wrong-headed as this would none the less have been—for a validating, not an accrediting, role for higher education. I am sure that the hon. Member for Dewsbury understands the difference.

Accreditation secures the professional acceptability of a qualification. That is what the Teacher Training Agency will do in respect of higher education institutions, groups of schools and individual schools—satisfying itself that any body wishing to offer teacher training has the necessary commitment to the Secretary of State's criteria and the ability to deliver high quality. That is done by civil servants in my Department at present. There is no sensible way of interpreting a requirement that higher education institutions must accredit as well as being accredited at the same time. That is illogical nonsense, and it will not work in practice.

The Opposition in another place seemed to take the view earlier that it would be a simple matter for the Government to tidy up what had been left so as to meet the intentions of the other place. But may I commend to those who like a good read the *Official Report* of the Bill's Third Reading in another place? It has all the makings of an excellent whodunnit—we are on tenterhooks to discover who will accredit whom throughout the debate.

Arrangements favoured by the Opposition are absolutely blindingly unclear. There is no final page with the answer to that question. I am sure that the hon. Member for Dewsbury will give us an answer. But, whatever she does, she cannot cite the support of those in another place, who left no clear answer.

This is not simply a matter for a harmless bit of mid-afternoon amusement at the Opposition's expense. As well as being defective and confused, the amendments are wrong in principle, because they reflect the concern of the Labour party to preserve the vested interests and producer interests at all costs all the way down the line.

Groups of schools that want to work with higher education, and have their courses validated, must have the power to do so. The Bill provides for that. Most current school-based schemes have chosen that option, but the issue is whether we make that an absolute legal requirement.

Although that will doubtless be debated in Committee, we are clear that schools should have the freedom to choose whether they work with higher education partners as long as they meet the necessary standards as judged by the Teacher Training Agency, which will monitor both the higher education institutions and the schools.

Judging by the evidence of the other place, the Labour party—we shall hear what it has to say this afternoon—seems to want to keep schools firmly and for ever in the junior role, regardless of the quality of their courses and the new teachers they train. I will not accept such a restriction on choice, and therefore must tell the House that we will table amendments in Committee to overturn the amendments and consequential amendments to clauses 12 and 14, and thereby reintroduce the measure of choice, which, under our policies, schools and students are enjoying—not in some theoretical future, but in a real and

valuable present in Birmingham, Kent and other parts of the country. I am sure that no Conservative Member would wish to prevent schools from enjoying just that.

I shall deal with student unions in part II of the Bill.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): On teacher training, it would seem that much of my right hon. Friend's argument, with which I agree, about the advisability of introducing the TTA is based on the idea that we are abolishing the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. I thoroughly applaud him for doing that, but can he convince me and the House how the new agency will perform better than CATE, because CATE's record left a lot to be desired?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend laboured in this vineyard for a while as a distinguished higher education Minister, and contributed a lot to the Department's thinking. CATE was an advisory body and, like all such bodies, its advice could sometimes be set aside by Ministers—I think it thought, sometimes wrongly.

The advisory function of CATE will be rolled forward into the TTA with a statutory life, and with a substantial and independent role to advise Ministers. The TTA will continue to be able to seek the advice of Her Majesty's inspectorate and OFSTED, and its sole criteria, which will be laid down by the Secretary of State, as they are laid down now, will be to judge whether a course should be put forward for student teachers to enter, enjoy and flourish in.

All the best aspects of CATE will be rolled forward, and I pay tribute to it for what it has done, just as much as I welcome my hon. Friend's welcome for the reforms that we are introducing.

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): The Secretary of State described the new settlement that he is hoping to create. Having lost the arguments in the other place on this crucial part of the Bill, particularly in relation to the notion of partnership between schools and higher education institutions, does he really think that he is able to create a new settlement if the first thing that he does is use a whipped majority in this House to defeat votes that he lost in the other place?

Mr. Patten: All the issues will be discussed in detail in Committee. The hon. Gentleman's description of the Government's single defeat was a little over-ripe; some of their Lordships thought that it was not cricket to call two votes so early in the afternoon.

We are convinced on policy grounds that ours is the correct course. I am all in favour of partnerships between higher education institutions and schools, if those concerned want them: I have said that two or three times this afternoon, once in answer to an intervention from my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey). I value the opportunities presented by good-quality higher education institutions; equally, I think that we should all value the opportunities that the Bill gives schools to provide a wider choice for students.

The question of student unions, which is dealt with in part II, was the subject of some lively debate in another place. The Bill implements our undertakings to reform student unions. It puts into effect the principle of voluntary membership: for the first time, all students will be able to choose whether to belong to a union. It also lists a series of tough requirements to be observed in student unions, and provides for the new standards to be open for all to see.

Those are important reforms. It must be said that there have been abuses, and I think that it will be known where those abuses occurred. In one instance, a student club—a Conservative association, as it happens, but it could have been Liberal or Labour—dared to query union policy in an election broadsheet; the student union punished the club by imposing a substantial fine. That simply does not represent the free interplay of ideas that we should cherish in our seats of learning. Student unions that are substantially financed by the taxpayer to serve students should never be used as political platforms.

In another recent case, a union resolved to campaign against aspects of Israeli policy on the West bank. Certainly students are entitled to hold opinions on such issues, but they must never spend taxpayers' money to prosecute their political views.

In both those cases, the unions' policies were eventually reversed, although in one case the intervention of the courts was needed. Things should never have gone that far: it should never be necessary for a student to go single-handed to the High Court.

I have not named the two institutions concerned; the point is that such abuses could have occurred anywhere, and that is what worries me as a legislator. At present, nothing in student union constitutions and practices prevents them from happening. They can be prevented only through the vigilance of ordinary students, who then have to go to court, which strikes me as wrong.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): I whole-heartedly agree with my right hon. Friend, but he could go further. The case involving the university of Greenwich showed that student unions could not even use non-taxpayers' money for political purposes that contravened their charitable status.

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend has advertently named the second of the two cases to which I referred. Indeed, charity law is very strict in that regard, and the code of practice on the face of the Bill will ensure that the facts are drawn to the attention of students.

Students should not be obliged to seek an injunction through the courts when they see something wrong. Our reforms ensure that the voice of the ordinary student can be heard more clearly. We should remember that—much to my pleasure—since last September the majority of new university students have been mature students rather than school leavers.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Patten: I was about to say no, but of course I will give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Rooker: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. I remember the day when he made a statement in the House launching this aspect of the Bill. Does he accept, however, that students—through their organisations in our universities and colleges—have been at the forefront of trying to stop the infiltration of extremists peddling fascist and anti-semitic views? They have been at the forefront of seeking to end that nonsense and close the organisations involved, and for that they deserve all our thanks.

Mr. Patten: As I hope the hon. Gentleman knows, I deplore fascism and anti-semitism just as much as he does. I am happy to condemn out of hand any anti-semitic activities engaged in by any person.

A key theme running through this part of the Bill is transparency. There is a code of practice, and the constraints that charity law imposes on student unions will be brought to student attention. The requirements of the 1986 legislation about freedom of speech—which my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford played a notable part in introducing—will have to be drawn to the attention of every student. Affiliations must be subject to scrutiny, and the rules for distributing grants to clubs must be open.

The Bill will also ensure that officers are elected properly—an issue which I know concerns my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman)—that financial reports are published, and that there is an accessible and independent complaints machinery.

The Bill recognises the rights of students who are not union members. When students exercise their new freedom under the Bill, it is vital that they are not victimised over access to the services. University and college funds will not be affected by the Bill, and they will be expected to maintain services for students who are not union members.

Despite some changes in another place, the principles driving our reform—choice, democracy and accountability—remain unchanged. I think that we have arrived at a pretty effective machinery for putting these principles into action. They give students the power of information, the power of choice and the power of the ballot box. In future, universities and colleges will also have to take proper responsibility for the conduct of their student unions. Many do that now, but not all, as my hon. Friends have recognised.

I have spoken for some time, largely because I gave way to almost everyone who wished to intervene. The Bill is not large by the standards of education Bills in recent years—such as the Education Reform Act 1988 or the Education Act 1993, for that matter—but it is very important. We have already opened up much of education to the positive effects of greater choice and increased accountability. It is now time to put the last pieces of the jigsaw in place, as we do the same thing for teacher training and student unions.

I do not ask the House to rally to the twin causes of choice and accountability for their own sake—although they are principles which, as a democrat, I hold dear, as do many hon. Members opposite. I ask the House to support the Bill because it is good for standards. It is good for the highest possible standards of teacher training. The Teacher Training Agency will bring together responsibility for quality, funding and information so that each reinforces the rest. I also think that it will be good for standards of probity and equity in the conduct of student unions, which will in future have to act under the spotlight of better information and no longer have a captive membership to command. In both respects, the Bill is necessary and overdue. I commend it to the House.

4.26 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): I am sorry that the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) was not present to hear the speech of the Secretary of State because I think that he would have felt vindicated in making his comments yesterday.

We have seen a typical performance from the Secretary of State today—one that we see on every occasion that he appears at the Dispatch Box. Time and time again he comes to the Dispatch Box to announce more chopping and changing and more experimentation in education—more change for change's sake—as if the whole education world were not already suffering from a great deal of fatigue owing to the weight and frequency of legislation in recent years.

The Secretary of State began by mentioning some of the changes which have taken place in recent years. He mentioned several areas in which there was no party political disagreement on the principle of the changes—although he likes to pretend that there are differences of opinion. He mentioned the national curriculum, local management of schools and inspection. There was never a vote against them on principle in Committee when the legislation was passed in 1988.

Mr. Pawsey: The hon. Lady has something of a selective memory. I served on the Committee which examined those Bills, as did certain Opposition hon. Members, and I can well remember Opposition Members making impassioned speeches over and over again opposing the reforms.

Mrs. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman seems to have a very selective memory. If he checks *Hansard*—I suggest that the Secretary of State does so as well; although he does not like serving on Committees, he could perhaps do the House the courtesy of reading the Committee *Hansard*—he will see that on no occasion did we vote against the local management of schools, the national curriculum or inspection.

Dame Angela Rumbold (Mitcham and Morden): I was the Minister responsible in the main for taking through the Education Reform Act 1988 and the national curriculum proposals in particular. I remember that many Opposition Members disagreed fundamentally with the proposals for the national curriculum, and I hope that the hon. Lady will acknowledge that fact.

Mrs. Taylor: The right hon. Lady seems to be confirming what I was saying. We did not vote against those ideas. We regard them in principle as changes for the better, but we were, and are, anxious to make them work properly in practice. Had Ministers listened to what my colleagues who served on that Committee suggested, and had they introduced the national curriculum and assessment arrangements after proper consultation, we should not have had the difficulties of a prescriptive national syllabus and inappropriate tests. Many of those who served on the Committee would recognise that that was the case.

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): Is the hon. Lady aware that a recent opinion poll revealed that some 77 per cent. of people are in favour of testing and of the publication of the results of tests? Will she make clear her position with regard to the National Union of Teachers' boycott of testing? Is she in favour of it or is she against it? It would be helpful if she were to make that clear.

Mrs. Taylor: For my part, I am surprised that only 77 per cent. of parents want their children to be tested regularly. I should have thought that all parents and teachers recognised that testing and assessment were an

essential part of education. However, we want tests which are purposeful and useful and which give us as parents good information.

The Secretary of State said that the Bill was not the largest piece of education legislation, and that is so. However, I remind him of some of the similarities between his speech today and what he was saying more than 12 months ago. When he introduced the previous Bill, which became law less than 12 months ago, he said that it would be the last piece in the jigsaw. He used the same phrase today. I wonder what other changes he has in mind and whether he has any long-term concept of where education is going.

The right hon. Gentleman then went on to insult the memory of Rab Butler by comparing his achievement in the previous Bill with that of 1944. History will judge, and its judgment of the Secretary of State may come rather sooner than he thinks.

The Bill, like many of its predecessors, is the product of the collected ideas of a small group of apparently small-minded, right-wing advisers who seem to be the only people to have the ear of the Secretary of State. Rapid change in education is again being forced through by arrogant Ministers who pay lip service to consultation and take pride in insulting those who disagree with them, be they parents, teachers or education officers.

The Secretary of State was recently reported in *The Times* as saying that change in education should be evolutionary, not revolutionary. That is a bit rich, even by the right hon. Gentleman's standards. He does not seem to know the meaning of the word "evolutionary" any more than he knows the meaning of the word "consultation". It is perhaps significant that he has not published the results of the consultation on the Bill. The representations have been so overwhelmingly against him that he is embarrassed to reveal the extent of the opposition before he forces through the measure.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: The hon. Lady referred to *The Times*, but has she had the opportunity to read the leading article in today's edition of that newspaper which makes it perfectly clear in a non-partisan way why the Secretary of State's proposals should proceed?

Mrs. Taylor: I have yet to see the Secretary of State do anything in a non-partisan way.

This Bill is another example of unwarranted changes where advice given to Ministers has been ignored and where only the determination of Members of another place made the Government see sense and bow to the inevitable pressures by watering down their proposals.

The first thing of which the House ought to be reminded —the Secretary of State was strangely reluctant to remind us of it—is that the Bill we are discussing today is not the one that the right hon. Gentleman published last November. The changes imposed by the House of Lords are very significant. However, they are not sufficient to make the Bill—especially part I—acceptable. To date, we have seen the success of a damage-limitation exercise only. But there is just so much improvement that can be made to a bad Bill.

Before turning to the main content of the measure, which I regard as being the part dealing with teacher education, I want to say a word about part II, which deals with student unions. For the Secretary of State this must be the most humiliating aspect of the whole sorry saga. It really is a climb-down of magnificent proportions, and it is a tribute to the responsible and very effective tactics of the National Union of Students and of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals. I—like other Members on both sides of the House, I am sure—recall the spirited but very inaccurate attacks on student unions that the Secretary of State made at the Conservative party conference last year and, indeed, at the previous year's conference.

Mr. Patten: A very good speech.

Mrs. Taylor: The right hon. Gentleman says that it was a very good speech. It was high on hype about the evils of students unions and on how the right hon. Gentleman would smash them once and for all. I believe that it was the only occasion on which he received anything like a cheer at his party's conference.

Following the climb-down on student unions and the humiliation of the withdrawal of the right hon. Gentleman's proposals—the climb-down was such that the Bill had to be delayed in the House of Lords for two months so that the new deal could be struck—it would be rather enjoyable to see the right hon. Gentleman try, at this year's party conference, to defend what he has done.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): He will not be there.

Mrs. Taylor: As my hon. Friend says, it does not look as if the right hon. Gentleman will be there. Thus we shall be denied the pleasure.

Originally, the Secretary of State decided that he would divide student union services into core services, to be publicly funded, and non-core services, to be available by voluntary subscription. This distinction was derided as being unnecessary and unworkable, and the Government's proposals met a torrent of hostility from all quarters. Indeed, Members of another place, such as Lord Beloff, who could hardly be described as left-wing, said that the proposals had

"united the entire university community from the most reactionary vice-chancellor to the most Left-wing"— [*Official Report*, House of Lords, 7 December 1993; Vol. 550, c. 839.]

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Lady, but I must point out that it is not in order to quote except from the words of a Minister in the current Session.

Mrs. Taylor: Having earlier advised one of my hon. Friends of exactly this rule, I am now myself getting carried away.

As Lord Beloff pointed out, the Secretary of State has to his credit the remarkable achievement of uniting the most right-wing vice-chancellor—unnamed, of course—and the most left-wing and with-it students. That was a very considerable achievement, but it was a response resulting from the fact that the Secretary of State was so unwilling to listen to all the advice that he was getting, even from Conservative Members.

I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) is in the Chamber as he has on other occasions pointed out that campus unions are not pre-entry closed shops in the usual sense of the term. The hon. Gentleman has gone on record as saying that the Government are getting things wrong in respect of student unions.

Mr. Forman: As the hon. Lady is citing the record, I make clear to her and to the House my belief that the current compromise on student unions is sensible and will work.

Mrs. Taylor: Yes, and it is a pity that the Secretary of State did not listen to the hon. Gentleman earlier. The whole student union movement, as well as the vice-chancellors, has welcomed the Government's climb-down on the Bill.

The NUS has welcomed what it describes as a wave of common sense from the Government, saying that the new proposals closely monitor its ideas and suggestions. The hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) is looking sceptically at me as I describe the NUS support for the Government's climb-down. He has been outspoken about the Government's proposals, and what they are doing with that part of the Bill. I hope that he, too, has accepted their climb-down, and that he and those few of his colleagues who may not be happy with the concessions will not try to change the Bill or to damage the new proposals, which are acceptable to most people outside the House.

Lady Olga Maitland *rose—*

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley) *rose—*

Mrs. Taylor: I had better give way to the hon. Member for Colne Valley.

Mr. Riddick: I had indeed thought that I might make one or two helpful suggestions during the passage of the Bill—but I hope that the hon. Lady is not trying to sow dissent within the parliamentary Conservative party. I must deny any such suggestion.

Mrs. Taylor: It is not my job to sow dissent in the parliamentary Conservative party when it has such experts on that subject within its own ranks.

Now I shall give way to the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland).

Lady Olga Maitland: I fail to understand what the hon. Lady said about student unions. Does she or does she not agree that there has been serious abuse of taxpayers' money by the NUS for political ends? And does she agree that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) has said that he regards the NUS as a useful training ground for Labour politicians, and therefore justified?

Mrs. Taylor: To find examples of massive abuse of taxpayers' money, we have only to look at the budgets that the Government give their Departments for propaganda, and the way in which those have increased over recent years. Furthermore, as has been said already by a Conservative Member, and as has always been the case, charity law can take care of any abuse within the NUS. The fact that the NUS can welcome those provisions in the Bill more or less as they now stand proves that the Government have been forced to climb down.

The most serious part of the Bill, and the part that concerns me most, is part I, on teacher education. Everyone must agree that there has been much rapid change in education over recent years, and that it has taken place at a rate that few professions have experienced. Yet it is the professionalism and dedication of teachers that have prevented the service from breaking down under the strain of all the changes.

The impact on many teachers has been devastating, and the overall impact has been demoralising. Unfortunately, many good teachers have left the profession because of the pace and direction of change. The Opposition are happy to give credit to the teachers who have had to cope with the massive changes. We are desperately worried that, rather than enhancing teacher education, the Bill will damage it and thereby threaten the quality of education in the classroom, which should be our first concern.

It is worth stressing the simple truth that improving teacher education should have one ultimate goal—improving the quality of education for all our children. Teachers are at the heart of all the learning that takes place in our schools. They have a critical role. They should not be technicians, delivering the national syllabus. Yet at times that seems to be what Ministers want. Teachers are professionals, and should be treated as such.

The education and training of teachers must be of the highest possible quality if our children are to get the best. Children are not objects on a conveyor belt, learning a block of facts.

Mr. Brandreth: I think that most of us would agree with what the hon. Lady has just said—that it is the teachers who count. We respect and value teachers' professionalism. That is why we want new teachers to be trained with the best existing teachers within the school environment, in partnership and balance with professional education within the colleges. Surely the hon. Lady endorses the broad thrust of the Bill.

Mrs. Taylor: I advise the hon. Gentleman to read the Bill, because that is not the effect that it will have. Indeed, it will damage those objectives.

We must make it clear that, although the curriculum matters, and school buildings matter, parents know that above all else the quality of teaching matters, and that there is no substitute for it. Unfortunately, regardless of whether the Government share the objectives that I have outlined, they have again sought confrontation rather than co-operation, on that as on so many other issues.

It should be possible to reach agreement on constructive suggestions to improve teacher education, to build on the undoubted good practice that already exists, and to discuss issues such as a core curriculum for teacher education, possible means of improving the induction of new teachers and, as has been mentioned by the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth), the requirement for special needs awareness on the part of all teachers. Those are all important issues that we should be discussing calmly to secure improvements—but that is not Ministers' approach. Instead they have tried to impose their decisions, which is why they were defeated in the House of Lords. The Government have been forced to climb down because they have been so stubborn on so many of the fundamentals in the Bill.

Some time ago the Government suggested that teaching should no longer be an all-graduate profession, and that a mums' army should come into the classroom. Fortunately, because of overwhelming pressure, they had to drop that barmy idea, but no one should be misled into thinking that the threat to the quality of teacher education has abated simply because that one idea has been dropped.

In part I there is a serious threat to the quality of teacher education. That is why we oppose the Bill. We oppose the creation of yet another quango—the Teacher Training Agency—and especially the attempt to separate teacher

education from the rest of higher education. The Opposition have no hesitation in saying that we shall abolish the agency, because we believe that the existing framework for initial teacher training is far better than anything that the Government propose.

We are not surprised that the Government are putting more powers into the hands of a quango.

Lady Olga Maitland: The hon. Lady seems to be saying that the Opposition are satisfied with the present arrangements for teacher training. Does she not agree that the way in which teacher-training colleges today imbue their students with political indoctrination, which is passed on so that they can manipulate children, is an absolute scandal? We have to clear that out and get back to real standards.

Mrs. Taylor: If the Government take seriously remarks such as those, it shows why they are running into such difficulty. I seem to recall that the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam said on a radio programme some time ago that she had not been to a department of teacher education. If that is still the case, I am not surprised that she makes such comments. As I have already said, a great deal concerning teacher education could be constructively discussed. We are not complacent about the quality of teacher education. I have already outlined half a dozen issues on which there could be and should be constructive discussions, but the Government are not interested in that. All they are interested in is imposing their will regardless of the realities.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): Apart from the political issues that the hon. Lady has just mentioned, would she have some concern at least for a recent survey —of about two years ago—that showed that 84 per cent. of teachers surveyed did less than five hours training in teacher-training colleges on teaching children to learn to read? Does not she believe that that is something that needs rectification—and urgently? Does not she understand that the Bill will go a long way to ensuring that such a problem is solved?

Mrs. Taylor: I shall make two points on that. The first is that the very teachers that the hon. Gentleman is criticising are those that the Government are going to entrust with the education of future teachers. The second is to point out that, yes, I am concerned if that statistic is correct; but what have the Government been doing about it for the past 15 years?

The Bill extends the functions of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, which retains its central role in teacher education. There seems to be, therefore, no reason why the role should not be afforded to the Higher Education Funding Council for England. However, that is not the approach of Ministers. They are intent on splitting the teaching profession from higher education and that is dangerous and bureaucratic and will lead to many problems.

In another place, issues such as the importance of research and its place in future were discussed and a compromise solution was suggested by many people. However, there can be no complete solution to issues such as where educational research should lie, as the problem exists simply because the whole concept behind the Bill is flawed—the concept of separating teacher education and higher education.

Much of the discussion that we shall want to have in Committee and, indeed, at later stages will centre on the proposal to promote wholly school-centred training. Those provisions are very difficult to justify and they undermine the partnership between the academic and professional components of teacher education. Indeed, on occasions, Ministers have praised that partnership and said how important it is. There is a need for partnership between higher education and schools if we are to get the best of both worlds for our teachers in future. I am worried about the burden of school-based training on schools and I am also worried because the Government are yet again making decisions before their own pilot schemes have been evaluated. That is not the way to proceed.

The support for partnership between teacher education and higher education is well rehearsed and was concentrated on in the House of Lords. Many people have submitted evidence that that partnership is essential if we are to get the best education for our teachers in future. Michael McCrum, master of Corpus Christi college, Cambridge, said:

> "We need to build on existing successful partnerships between universities and schools . . . We need more school-based training, but not so much as to threaten the quality of children's education."

He went on to say:

> "We need to cut out bureaucracy, not extend it."

Mr. Forman: With all the evidence to which the hon. Lady has just referred of support for voluntary partnership arrangements between higher education institutions and schools, why is she so afraid and why are her hon. Friends so afraid of the Bill? It does not make partnership compulsory, as she would seek to do. It merely leaves open the opportunity for partnership, which she says has been taken in the majority of cases.

Mrs. Taylor: It is because I think—

Mr. Patten: It is a 1960s attitude.

Mrs. Taylor: The Secretary of State says that I have a 1960s attitude. I must repeat what I said to his hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs), that, if he is to put teacher education into the hands of today's teachers, he will be putting it into the hands of those who were trained in the 1960s, which would not seem to fulfil his objectives. I do not understand why the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington, who supports the idea of partnership, does not want to enshrine the idea of partnership. Surely, if we are to build on best practice, we ought to be moving in that direction, rather than cutting off or allowing to be cut off those who will be responsible for teacher education in future.

Mr. Forman: I can give the hon. Lady the answer to that question. I trust the schools and the heads and the governing bodies to make sensible decisions, and in the vast majority of cases they will want to opt for partnership with higher education institutions.

Mrs. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman says that the vast majority of schools would make sensible decisions. The question must be asked: what if they do not? What happens to the education of those children, which could go awry, if proper safeguards are not built in? We are trying to build in safeguards so that the essential component of higher education is there and so that the best possible partnership

[Mrs. Taylor]

deal is made between schools and higher education. I believe that that is the way to produce the best for the future.

An OFSTED report, "The New Teacher", recommended strong and effective partnerships between schools and higher education. As the Secretary of State is keen to quote OFSTED reports when it suits him, he ought to be taking account of what his own advisers tell him on that issue. I believe that all teacher-training courses should be validated by higher education institutions. That is not only right in principle, but it also reflects best practice. Higher education institutions and schools have extensive experience of working well together. The best partnerships are created when we are building on them and are not seeking to divide and to destroy them.

The second problem that I would put to the Government—

Mr. Pawsey: The hon. Lady referred to OFSTED a moment ago. Does she recall the answer that the Secretary of State gave me to a question that I put to him about reading? He said that about 54 per cent. of students leaving training colleges did not feel sufficiently well equipped to teach reading. Given that statistic, does not she agree that there is a fundamental reason for reforming the way in which we teach and train our teachers?

Mrs. Taylor: That is no reason for giving teacher education and training over to schools. I am concerned if that is the case, and, as I said earlier, there could be a constructive dialogue on such issues. The trouble is that the Government are not interested in anything like constructive dialogue to improve the situation. They are far more interested in confrontation and in making their own decisions regardless of evidence.

The second problem that I want to put to Ministers is that the Government's proposals seem to ignore the impact of school-based teacher training on the schools themselves. The Secretary of State retreated from his predecessor's plans to make all post-graduate trainee secondary teachers spend 8 per cent. of their time in school. The Secretary of State said that he considered that 24 weeks out of 36 spent in school would be more appropriate. That implied that the Secretary of State had some awareness of what trainee teachers required.

Unfortunately, that apparent awareness has not been reflected in the Bill. Many of those people who have been involved in school-based teacher education have commented on the difficulties that it can impose on a school. The head of St. Peter's high school in Gloucester said that the eight post-graduates in his school needed much support and advice from the staff and that an additional burden was placed upon teachers. Students who have been educated and trained in those circumstances have said things such as, "We want advice but we do not want to be a burden on teachers." We must balance the interests of children in schools and in so doing put their interests before the needs of trainee teachers.

School-based training puts pressures on schools if there is insufficient time available for teachers to teach teachers as well as children. There are pressures on funding. Clearly, extra arrangements have to be made. Many schools welcome some trainee teachers to their schools each year, but many schools feel that it is not a good idea to have student teachers in school every year. Some pupils might find that a high proportion of their lessons were being taught by students. If we are to get the best of both worlds, we should understand the pressures and take measures to ensure that they do not overwhelm the schools that are accepting students on the present partnership arrangement.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Perhaps I should warn the Secretary of State that the hon. Member for Welwyn and Hatfield (Mr. Evans) appears to be roaming round the Government Back Benches. We are unaware whether he is promoting his campaign for the Secretary of State to be sacked—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That is of no interest to the Chair.

Mrs. Taylor: I am sure that the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) was of great interest to the Secretary of State. I am sure that even now names are being taken.

Some significant changes were made to the Bill in the other place. Not least there was the Government's late acceptance of the principle that school-centred courses should be restricted to graduates only. That is important. Graduate status, however, does not automatically confer a sound understanding of child development. That is why the Labour party promoted in the other place the amendment to which the Secretary of State has referred.

The Secretary of State has said that the amendment was technically deficient, but it was passed in the other place. The right hon. Gentleman may be right, but the principle enshrined in the amendment had the overwhelming support of the majority of those who spoke at all stages of the Bill's passage in the other place. Such is the antagonism to the concept of the Bill—that of separating teacher education from higher education—that the Bill would be in great difficulty if the Government tried to overturn that which ensued in the other place. The Opposition will certainly want to improve on the amendment passed in the other place if it is technically deficient. We believe that it is the key to minimising the dangers that the Bill could create. We believe also that the proposed partnership is fundamental.

We have heard about pilot schemes. The Secretary of State will not even wait for the results of those schemes. He is so anxious to push through his legislation that he will not seek the advice of those who have been involved in pilot schemes to learn what is right, what is appropriate and what is wrong. The right hon. Gentleman has adopted the same approach to every piece of legislation with which he has been involved. The years following his appointment have been ones of turmoil. They are years that have been costly to the education of our children. At the same time, the right hon. Gentleman has learnt little.

We agree that much needs to be done to improve teacher education. Unfortunately, that is not being suggested by the Secretary of State and the necessary provisions are not in the Bill. We are opposed to the Bill in principle, but in Committee we shall be concerned to lessen the damage that it could do to teacher education.

We are concerned to defend the amendments that were won in the other place and, where appropriate, to improve

upon them. There are many other failings that should be discussed in Committee, such as the need for a general teaching council.

There is great concern outside the House about the impact of the Bill. It may not be the largest or the greatest Bill that the Government have introduced, but it is certainly causing much concern. Those involved in higher education do not want the Bill. Similarly, it is not wanted by teachers. By and large, schools do not want it. The information that I have received from the National Association of Governors and Managers makes it clear that, from the governors' point of view, there are many significant problems. The governors stress that the primary function of schools is to educate their pupils. They state that teachers have not been trained to educate adults. They list a series of factors that suggest that it is irresponsible of the Secretary of State to place new tasks and responsibilities on schools when the chances of success are somewhat remote.

The Secretary of State may continue with his bunker mentality. In other words, he may continue to refuse to listen. I am sorry that the House is wasting time on the Bill because it is not a constructive or purposeful measure in terms of improving education. It is a waste of parliamentary time when there are so many urgent issues that are in need of discussion. We could have used our time to discuss when the Government will do something about nursery education. When will the Government take on board the evidence that proves that, if all three and four-year-olds had access to nursery education, they would have a better start in education thereafter?

Mr. Brandreth: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Taylor: No. I have already given way twice to the hon. Gentleman.

I am always interested when Conservative Members feel that they are under pressure. Whenever we, the Opposition, mention nursery education and the record of Labour councils that provide places for three and four-year-olds—the record shows that parents living in Labour council areas have three times the chance of getting their children into nursery education than parents who live in Tory-controlled areas—Conservative Members feel ruffled and defensive about what is happening. We keep hearing about glorious initiatives, but it is clear that not one new nursery place—

Mr. Pawsey: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. As the hon. Lady is describing changes to nursery education, surely she should endeavour to put a cost on the changes that she is suggesting. Do you feel that that would be properly in order?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am concerned only with whether what is being said is relevant to the subject under consideration. I remind the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) that we are dealing with the Bill's Second Reading. The matters that she raises must relate to that.

Mrs. Taylor: The Bill is about teacher training, Madam Deputy Speaker. I think that teachers would find teaching far easier if all children received nursery education. The explanatory memorandum includes phrases that relate to connected purposes. Few things are more connected and more relevant to the Bill than nursery education.

I cannot understand why Conservative Members are unable to bring themselves to realise that we as a society are facing vast costs because we do not have nursery education for three and four-year-olds. Nursery education gives youngsters the best start in education. They settle into jobs more easily later in life, are more likely to have jobs when they leave school, are less likely to truant and are less likely to be involved in juvenile crime. The advantages to society of nursery education are such that it should be a priority. If Conservative councils were providing the level of nursery education that Labour councils are offering, we should be well on our way to meeting the target.

There are other subjects that should concern us. When will the Government do something about our crumbling schools? They have had 15 years in government and there is a £4,000 million backlog of repairs. Teachers should be teaching in decent circumstances. Instead, the Secretary of State spends his time on issues such as sex education, and not on important ones such as class size, which matters both to teachers and parents.

Mr. Brandreth: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Taylor: No. I have given way to the hon. Gentleman twice.

I am sure that Conservative Members do not like to be reminded of the fact that the Audit Commission has said that class sizes are increasing, which is of great concern to parents, as is the quality of education of our teachers.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): I do not wish to stretch out the debate—that is the last thing that I want to do—but the hon. Lady should know that there is a difference between the size of classes and teacher-pupil ratios. How classes are organised is a matter for the headmaster or mistress, but the teacher-pupil ratio is going down.

Mrs. Taylor: I refer to the Audit Commission's report that states that class sizes are increasing because of the formula on the local management of schools. As teachers become more experienced, they command higher salaries, which leads to a rising claim on schools' budgets. That is not a Labour party report, but an Audit Commission report. The hon. Lady would do well to look at the evidence.

Just before Christmas, the Prime Minister said that 15 per cent. of children in Britain received an education that was as good as education anywhere in the world. Unfortunately, he then went on to say that the rest did not. That is an incredible indictment of 15 years of Conservative government. The Bill will do nothing to improve education standards in this country and could even threaten them. We should be enhancing the quality of teaching by ensuring that all our teachers have the right level of experience.

The Secretary of State may not be in his present position for very long, but if he is to learn anything from his tenure of office, he should by now have learned to consult and to listen. The fact that he has failed to do so is shown by the tatty Bill now before the House. We shall oppose it today. It is a suitable swansong for the Secretary of State that his legislative signing-off should come in the form of such a potentially damaging Bill. The right hon. Gentleman has learned nothing during his two years' tenure of office. We will oppose the Bill today, but we will still try to amend and improve it in Committee.

5.12 pm

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): I support the Bill. Some of it will have to be amended and returned to the good health with which it started its life in the other place. The Bill is helpful to British education.

Bit by bit the powers of the National Union of Students to influence politically youth and other people in the country have been wiped out and are probably coming to an end. In terms of politics, the NUS has done more to damage the image of students in this country than any other organisation over the past 30 years. The grant system would have been more generous if people throughout the country had felt that students were going to university not to become anarchists and Stalinist infiltrators—

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: And gay livers.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I would not say gay livers—sometimes they can be reformed better than others. The NUS has had a damaging influence on the students of this country, and the students' image will improve now that the NUS has less influence.

Nobody should be compelled to be a member of a certain body, except by their citizenship—and it is even possible for people to emigrate if they want. I do not like closed shops and I welcome the end of the last closed shop.

Mr. Don Foster *rose—*

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman as I am sure that he will support my views.

Mr. Foster: In view of the fact that the right hon. Gentleman said that, if passed, the legislation would enhance students' status and that the main reason why students had lost out in grant support was their low status, will he join us in the Lobby to try to increase financial support for students?

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I must seek the defence of Madam Deputy Speaker, otherwise I shall have to make another speech. If I do that I shall talk too long and other hon. Members will not be able to contribute, which would make me unpopular in the House. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to discuss the subject with me at length on another occasion, I am sure that we can find a suitable time.

I am most concerned about teacher training. The key to educational advance is to have good teachers in the classrooms teaching the right subjects with discipline. Unless we have good teachers, it does not matter what curriculums or tests we have, there will be no advantage to this country. I have a long experience of teaching and I want to concentrate on teacher training.

Do we need training? It was not until recently that teachers undertook long training sessions. Does that training improve student teachers? Many public schools have been staffed by non-trained teachers and their pupils have won places at Oxford and Cambridge by sitting the same examinations as other students—and usually they play good rugby along the way. Sometimes, teachers return to university and take degrees later. I know many public school heads who have never done a day's training and who I would like to see at the head of any institution in this country.

The idea that everyone has to be trained should be challenged. The Labour Party never challenges orthodoxy—the thought of doing so horrifies it, which is why it still retains clause 4.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Does my right hon. Friend recall the reference made by the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) to non-graduate teachers? Whatever the future may hold, with his experience of teaching, will my right hon. Friend confirm that in the past many excellent teachers in the classroom did not hold professional university degrees? That is probably true of current teachers as well.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: That is correct. I employed such teachers in schools and they were particularly good—what mattered was what they could do inside the classroom. I trust that teacher training helps, but in many cases non-teacher trainees had better control of their classrooms than teachers with degrees and other qualifications behind them. Not so long ago anyone with a degree could be taken on as a secondary school teacher in the state sector. I think that there used to be a better intake of teachers then than there is now. Potential teachers tried teaching; they disappeared after a month or two if they could not cope.

I have been told that the present calibre of potential teachers—judged by the percentage of those with lower-class degrees—is worse than in any other profession. I should like to check that statistic. That was certainly not the case in the past, when graduates with first-class honours degrees tried teaching to see whether they could do it—some of them obtained training after they had gained some experience of teaching. The idea that training has always been with us, which is why we have always had a good educational system, is wrong.

Mr. Patten: I can help my right hon. Friend with his earlier question. It is a sad but true statistic that OFSTED, the independent inspectorate, recently reported that, in its view, about one in 10 of the output of teachers from teacher training higher education institutions were not fit to be teachers. That sad statistic must be put right, which is why we are introducing the reforms.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: That is why the Bill is before the House. I sometimes think that training for teachers—certainly at sixth form level—is a restrictive lower-middle class practice that should be considered by us at some stage.

Some 20 per cent. of teachers do not need training. They are simply born to teach and are only spoilt when they go away to train. Whatever we do, some 20 per cent. of teachers will always remain at the bottom of the pile, unable to cope. They will have a riot with a dead rabbit whenever they enter a classroom. The 60 per cent. of teachers in the middle will show some degree of improvement along the way. I am an agnostic or even an atheist when it comes to the idea that we must worship training.

If we are to have training, what do we do about it and where should it take place? I must put it on the record that I am trained as a teacher. I am trained to teach in primary schools, particularly in phonics. Originally, I was a specialist in reading, which few people in the country know. I trained under Professor Oliver, who was a great philosopher. I shall refer later to part of his philosophy that

was not very applicable in the classroom. It will be a treat for the House when I come to that near the end of my speech.

The best teachers that I have ever met were trained in one of two ways. Many of them have now disappeared. The first were student teachers. They took the equivalent of the A levels and were then given free training in schools, and they then had free training after that. When I was a head, my first deputy head was trained in that way. He was a teacher to his fingertips in everything that he did. Student teachers were trained entirely in the school and they had to attend lectures outside. They were marvellous—they were some of the best teachers that we have ever had in this country.

The second best group of teachers, of which there is no equivalent now, were the emergency trained teachers who were trained after the second world war when we were short of teachers. They were mature men and women who had served in the forces, many of them for six years. They came back and were trained in 13 months. How were they trained? That is what matters to us today. They were trained in emergency training colleges by heads and deputy heads who were on one and two-year secondments. They were taught by people who knew what was happening in the classroom. They were not taught highfalutin' theories which had no relation even to a rabbit hutch; they were taught how to get children under control and how to teach them reading and writing. They were the best. Without them, the school-leaving age would not have been raised. The age was raised during my first year of teaching. Schools were carried by emergency-trained teachers. Many people up to the age of 30 were trained by teachers.

Trainee teachers should not be sent to higher education institutions—they could be ruined there. They would be bored stiff and be contaminated with the wrong ideas.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my right hon. Friend accept that one of the finest teachers whom I ever met at one of our secondary schools was trained in precisely that way? Does he also accept that those who came after and who are now in our schools realise how much they depended on those who had the discipline of that sort of training and of serving in the forces?

Sir Rhodes Boyson: There should be teaching schools —that is, schools where teachers are trained totally inside them. Such schools would need special staffing. We need teaching schools like our teaching hospitals. Medics are not trained to be general practitioners by taking them miles away. Those who will be operating surgeons are trained by operating surgeons doing the job. That is the only way to train teachers. Doctors walk alongside the students and see the operations taking place. That is what we want. We want teaching schools like our teaching hospitals. It seems that Labour wants more higher education—or probably longer education. I sometimes doubt whether it is even higher education. Labour wants higher education, instead of doing something for the person who matters the most—the child in the classroom.

I do not know the views of the Secretary of State, but there should be staff colleges like those in the services. Once again, people should not be brought in from universities and all that other crap. *[Interruption.]* Madam Deputy Speaker, you must excuse me—I got carried away and I did not hear what I was saying. That is rare in the House. If it was an unparliamentary expression, it is one that none of us heard.

Mr. Riddick: It was crafts.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend —it was crafts.

I turn to the question of qualifications. The qualifications for teachers in this country are different from those elsewhere. In most of the continent, teachers are qualified to teach one or two subjects only in certain age groups—they cannot teach outside that. The odd thing is that, unlike the masters certificate in the merchant navy or a licence for driving, a British teaching certificate enables a teacher to teach anywhere. I gained from that.

As I said, I trained for primary schools and I applied for jobs in primary schools. At that time, there was a surplus of teachers and I was not appointed. One day when I came out, the deputy education officer for Lancashire touched me on the shoulder and asked whether I would like to start tomorrow as a head of department in a secondary school. I said yes. That is what the Secretary of State should do with the Bill. *[Interruption.]* Madam Deputy Speaker, you must protect me from having conversations with my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman).

The teaching certificate should say whether it is for primary or secondary, and the subjects to be taught. One of the worst aspects of British education is that timetables are often filled by people who have no interest or qualifications in a subject but no one else wants to teach it. Games, religious education and other subjects were ruined because of that. The subjects should be specified. If people think that training is so important, for goodness sake, training that is done in an institution must relate to what one does afterwards; otherwise, teaching by osmosis seems to be strange.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster referred to the calibre of teachers, but I must not bring her in again. What matters in schools is the calibre of teachers, not the number. More schools in the country would be better run by two thirds of the staff and the rest of the money should be used to increase their salaries. Unless we do that, we will not improve the calibre of teachers coming in. That is the important thing. We have one of the smallest teacher-pupil ratios in the world; it is half that of the Japanese and the Israelis. If the NUT campaigned for fewer teachers on higher salaries, that would do more for education than is being done at present.

I shall move on quickly because I do not want to take too long. There is something wrong with standards. I know that we have been in office for 15 years and I know what happened before. One is glad to see signs of sensibility coming back to the Labour party. Obviously, it will take another 10 years before sensibility returns completely, but there is some coming in now. The national curriculum has been taken on board, as have other things. It is interesting that we have had to fight for every reform. People must know that they owe nothing to the Labour party for the reforms. Ten years later, Labour Members catch up. In 10 years' time, they will be advocating what I am saying now if we give them time. If we give them pep pills in between, the process may be quicker. People owe Labour nothing. In Committee, we fought for every reform—I was on Standing Committees for four years—and others here

[Sir Rhodes Boyson]

fought in the House. Of course, it is all sweetness and light now. In another five or 10 years' time, Labour will be saying the same as we are saying now.

There are two important things in teaching, apart from the natural calibre of teachers. One is proper training. That means watching a master teacher teach. It does not mean being in a group of 500 listening to a lecture from someone who has views on education which have never been put into practice—and never will be—inside a classroom. In my last headship, I had a head of remedial who was fantastic. I would not say that I am of the same calibre as him—I have never seen anyone like him. I used to put staff alongside him for three months before they went into the main school. They learnt things. To pay that man an extra £5,000 or £10,000 to train teachers, let us try that in our schools. The status of the profession would be raised if teachers trained themselves.

I mentioned Professor Oliver. The school leaving age was raised in my first year of teaching. That reform was not greeted with enthusiasm by those who had to stay at school another year instead of getting a job, nor was it acclaimed by teachers who had to control those pupils in the classroom. The second raising of the school leaving age occurred in my last year of teaching.

Mr. Win Griffiths: I was there.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: Yes, and that is why the hon. Gentleman is here now. This is our escape. We must have a drink together afterwards.

I was given class 3c because there was not a 3z. Those pupils, some of whom are still my friends, were the most awkward characters that I had ever met, and their big concern was to get out of school. The headmaster's job was similar to mine—to get them to a technical college three miles away driving there in the morning, returning in the afternoon. I was allowed a full curriculum, anything that I wanted as long as those pupils did not return to school. They nearly drove me out of teaching. After my first two months I decided that I could not control one of them.

That year the first snow came in November to Ramsbottom, from where Albert came and was eaten by the lion. At that time, his was the only name on the honours board of that school. I had to teach the class in a laboratory and the gas and water taps added to the excitement. I blew the whistle for the class to come in but nobody appeared and when I went out the pupils were pointing not to the Archangel Gabriel, but to the second-floor roof on which was a boy whom I called "C", and he was the most difficult boy in the class. They said, "What are you going to do about him, sir?". Fortunately I had been trained in the navy and I climbed the drainpipe all the way. This is all public knowledge because I have written it up. I got hold of the boy and brought him down, kicking him as we came. There was no corporal punishment, of course. When we got to the bottom there was a great cheer and the class said, "Good old sir. That was good, sir." They ran in like a set of whippets and I had no more trouble with them. One must pay attention to great philosophy, but one must also be sure that one can climb the rigging.

5.32 pm

Mr. Greg Pope (Hyndburn): I am not sure that I can follow the exploits of the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) who seems to be the Whacko of the current Parliament. When asked which is the best football team in the land, the right hon. Gentleman usually gives the right answer, but when asked about education policy, he seems to become more eccentric as the days go by. I hope that he will forgive me for saying that.

I was intrigued by his idea that, if teaching standards are not high enough, the answer is to abolish teacher education. Of course, what the right hon. Gentleman says today the Secretary of State will say tomorrow, and no doubt in Committee the Minister will move amendments to that effect.

Given the massive divergence between the Bill and the Secretary of State's original proposals, I am surprised that he is even prepared to give it a second glance, never mind a Second Reading. I hope that the Bill will fall, but I guess that it will arrive on the statute book at about the same time as an ungrateful Prime Minister dispatches the Secretary of State to the Back Benches. Even executive members of the 1922 Committee are on the BBC openly calling for the Secretary of State to be sacked. It is not often that the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) speaks for the whole House, but on this occasion there will be no discord.

The Bill is a massive humiliation for the Secretary of State. Throughout 1992 and 1993, we heard much about what became known as the mums' army—the idea that allowing under-qualified and under-trained people into our classrooms would in some way raise teaching standards. That is not in the Bill, because the Secretary of State finally discovered what everybody else in education knew in the first place—that the proposals were unworkable and unsound, and would lead to a lowering of teaching standards. Throughout that time, the Secretary of State managed to convey the impression that his vision of education amounted to advertisements which said, "Vacancy, teacher required, no experience necessary."

Another damaging proposal, to divorce teacher training from higher education institutions, appeared in the Bill when it was published in November, but that was radically amended in the other place. I understand that the Government intend to overturn that amendment in Committee, and the Secretary of State said as much in his speech. I urge the Government to exercise caution on that. I hope that everyone agrees that teachers need a theoretical as well as a practical background. Information on issues such as special needs, child development and classroom management need to be imparted to potential teachers before they go in at the deep end in classrooms.

Schools are under increasing pressure because of constant changes to the curriculum and on testing, and should not be expected to take the lead role in teacher education. Higher education institutions provide recognised qualifications for teachers with which all schools can identify, and it is unlikely that qualifications which are accredited by schools alone would carry quite the same weight.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Tim Boswell): I am following the hon. Gentleman's argument with interest. Does he accept that it is for schools and their teachers and governors to decide whether to participate in school

teacher training? Secondly, does he accept that the accreditation of these courses would not be by schools alone but by the agency that would be established by the legislation?

Mr. Pope: The problem is that, at almost every stage, the Government seek to abdicate responsibility. The questions that were asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) were not answered by the Secretary of State who will be responsible for determining the total number of teacher training places. What will happen if the schools that are given responsibility for teacher training do not come up to scratch? Such questions have not been answered. It seems that, as ever, the Government are saying, "It has nothing to do with us."

If the Government had wanted to improve and enhance the professional standing of teachers, they could have used the Bill to create a general teaching council—a proposal that is supported by many people in education. The proposed Teacher Training Agency will be yet another quango. The Government suffer from that terrible affliction, quangomania. One glance at the Secretary of State's most recent quango creation, the Funding Agency for Schools, leads us to believe that the Teacher Training Agency would be packed with the Government's dwindling band of supporters. Teachers deserve better than that.

Part II represents the Secretary of State's deepest humiliation. The original proposals, which were published last July in a consultation paper, suggested dividing student union activities between core and non-core services. The Secretary of State was told at the time—I was one of those who told him, as the *Official Report* will show—that the proposals were not just damaging, but half-baked and unworkable. They do not now appear in the Bill.

The Secretary of State told the House that the proposals by the National Union of Students on opting out did not go far enough, and that he wanted students to have to opt in to student unions. He has been forced to back down on that as well. In its original form, the Bill contained sweeping powers that would have allowed the Secretary of State to intervene in the affairs of universities and academic institutions. The proposals were met in almost equal part with ridicule and outrage by the people involved in running those institutions. It is no surprise that the Government were forced to withdraw them during the Bill's passage through the other place.

The Secretary of State told last year's Tory party conference that he would end the scandal of taxpayers' money being spent on political campaigns by student unions. At the Tory party conference he said, "Promises made, promises kept." How they must have cheered back in October, but a more apt description would have been: daft promises made, daft promises broken.

Leaving aside the vast amounts of taxpayers' money that the Secretary of State wastes on political campaigns, such as the outrageous amount that was spent on propping up the failed policy of opted-out schools by taking out adverts in our national newspapers, the Secretary of State must have known when he made those comments that student unions spend less than 1 per cent. of their funds on campaigning.

If he knew that when he made that speech to the Tory party conference, why did he say what he did, other than to get cheap applause at the conference itself? If he did not know it, that is more serious. Why did he not know it? After all, those figures came from a survey commissioned by his own Department.

The Secretary of State also said that he would end the National Union of Students' closed shop. There are times when it is hard to determine which the Secretary of State knows least about—student unions or employment law. They are not closed shops, and that has been accepted not only by the European Court of Human Rights but by previous Conservative Education Ministers.

Back in June 1992, the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman), who was then an Education Minister, told the House that student unions were not closed shops. He also said that the NUS differed from a closed shop in that individual unions themselves determine whether or not to affiliate. Students are not employees, and the NUS is not a trade union. Therefore, under previous employment legislation, it cannot operate a closed shop. By omitting any reference to the term "closed shop", the Bill tacitly accepts that.

All that humiliation for the Secretary of State would have been avoidable and unnecessary if only he had listened—something that the Government seem incapable of doing. If, a year ago, the Secretary of State and his Ministers had listened to the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals or to the National Union of Students instead of the more neanderthal elements on the Conservative Back Benches who are in their places this evening, he would not be in the sorry mess he is in today.

Part II is now so watered down that it is effectively sunk. It bears little resemblance to the Bill as published in November, and even less to the original proposals published last July. Part II as it stands could almost be mistaken for the NUS proposals. Perhaps this is the Secretary of State's new image: the student unions' friend, the champion of the NUS in Parliament. I hope so, because the National Union of Students deserves a great deal of credit for the way in which it has opposed the more outlandish proposals contained in the consultation document and the original Bill.

There are still concerns about part II of the Bill, in particular the procedures relating to the triggering of ballots on external affiliations. Particularly in small colleges, a tiny number of students could trigger a ballot year on year, even though those ballots produced overwhelming majorities in favour of continuing affiliation to external organisations such as the National Union of Students. The triggering of such ballots and the consequent expense is not a sensible use of public funds.

There are also problems relating to provisions for non-members—those who choose to take up the conscience clause and opt out of NUS or local student union membership. There is still some work to be done on that. It is interesting that the NUS wishes to be constructive in helping the Government to implement the proposals. I hope that, in Committee, the Government take the NUS up on that offer, so that those who have opted out of NUS membership have access to union services.

There is little to disagree with in part II, so complete has been the Secretary of State's humiliation. It is now an unnecessary piece of legislation. The same ends that now appear in part II could easily have been achieved through discussions with the interested bodies last year.

The only reason why part II exists and we are debating it this afternoon is that it would have been one humiliation too far for the Secretary of State to withdraw it. It exists

[Mr. Pope]

only to save his face. How much did this farce cost? How much did the consultation procedure cost, and how much parliamentary time has been wasted debating something that could have been agreed without legislation?

The Secretary of State, who is now back in his place, clearly will not be in office much longer. When he leaves office, I hope that he takes his Bill with him.

5.45 pm

Dame Angela Rumbold (Mitcham and Morden): The most disappointing speeches I have heard this afternoon were those by the hon. Members for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) and for Hyndburn (Mr. Pope), both of whom have lived through the past few decades without moving one jot or tittle into the present time. It is a shame that ideology should govern the Opposition to such an extent.

It is a great tribute to the current Secretary of State, who made such an excellent speech opening this debate, that he demonstrated a lack of dogma and ideology. He was saying that, having looked at what has happened over the past years and having studied what is happening in schools today, he recognises that it is absolutely right to look at this most important feature of our education system—the training of our teachers.

I do not disagree with anything said this afternoon about the importance of having high-quality professional teachers in our classroom. Throughout my career, I have firmly believed that it was essential that those in our classrooms should be of the highest quality and the most professional. We witness that day in, day out, in many schools up and down the country. Many such people are working in our schools today.

I greatly enjoyed the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson). What he said about the training of teachers and its historical background is absolutely correct. It had occurred to me that only in the past 50 years or so have we become absolutely obsessed with the need to train people before they take up what is essentially a vocation—and sometimes, in the case of a profession such as teaching, a calling.

He was absolutely right to point out that some people will be excellent teachers. They have a calling, and go into teaching because it is the one thing they want to do above all else. When they get in front of a class, they make it plain to the children that they are there to teach them and impart their knowledge. They are excellent people.

At the other end of the spectrum, there are those who, when they are discussing the future with their careers masters and mistresses and thinking "What shall I do with my life?", then say, "I think that I will be a teacher." When they get into the classroom, somewhere, somehow, they have to discover that they are not able to be teachers. The sooner they find that out, the better it is, not only for the children, but, most importantly, for them. They will find themselves in a profession which will be a misery and a burden if they are not able to convince the children that they are capable of controlling them and giving them the education they need.

The lengthy process of reforming Britain's education system has taken a long time because it was in such a deplorable mess when the Conservative party took office in 1979. Too much ideology had overtaken the teacher training colleges, the universities, the people in place in our schools, and the schools themselves. We needed to take a clear look at what we were trying to do.

Sadly, all too often, the people in the schools had forgotten what they were supposed to be doing. They had forgotten that they were supposed to be teaching single subjects, and that they were responsible for the good management of schools. They had forgotten exactly what they were there to do, which was to enthuse and to teach children so that they could go forth from school and into the world well trained, well educated and well disciplined. Sadly, none of those things was happening when we started seriously to think about how best to reform our education system.

Those reforms have taken a long time. They were bound to take a long time, because so much needed to be done. I welcome the day today when we have got to the point when we can consider reforming our training of teachers. We are about to introduce into the House of Commons a serious and important measure, which I most sincerely welcome.

I welcome the measure—not that I have any particular hang-ups about teacher training colleges. I emphasise that I have visited a considerable number of teacher training colleges and teacher training departments in universities, and, most importantly of all, an enormous number of schools. When I was in local government, for about nine months I looked at all the schools in the local authority where I was the chairman of the education committee.

I sat at the back of classes listening and watching how the children, in primary and secondary schools, were being taught. That is the one memory that has remained with me all the way through my career in this place. That experience gave me all kinds of insights into what was happening in our schools. It certainly gave me the impetus to believe that at some stage we should reform the training of teachers.

It is interesting that one can study 50 different primary schools, sitting at the back of classes watching what various teachers are doing. Groups of children of the same age in one small borough in Greater London varied from school to school. The quality of the teaching depended entirely on the gifts, intelligence and training of the people in front of those children.

The teachers who had mastery of their subject and who understood small children were much more successful in the primary schools than those teachers who were poorly trained, and in some cases self-taught, in some of the subjects that they were trying to impart to the children and who, moreover, had spent far too much time studying child development and not nearly enough time understanding what children needed in order to learn.

When one considered how children were being taught to read, one realised just what a muddle some of those poor creatures were in. I call them "poor creatures" because at that stage I really did think that it was pathetic that we had people in our classrooms who were so unable to teach children the simple basic subjects within our curriculum at primary school level.

One thing that my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North said which really took my fancy concerned the old days—the good old days. Perhaps I am getting old as well. I willingly admit that, because I think that it is a good thing to look back to what happened in the old days, although I never recommend that we take anything more

than the lessons of history to apply to the future. I never want to go back in time. I always want to take those lessons and put them to good use for the future.

What my right hon. Friend said struck a chord with me. He said that, in those days, people had to have mastery of one subject or of one or two subjects. One of the most confusing things that happened in the early days of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s was that we tried to teach people everything to teach in primary schools. That was a mistake.

We shall not reform our primary school education completely until we have tackled the conviction that young men and women can go into primary schools and teach the whole range of subjects, including maths, English, science, geography and history, equally well to children between the ages of five and 11. The truth of the matter is that they cannot.

Children in those classes will quickly discern those subjects that the teachers really enjoy teaching and really know, and they will pick up on those subjects and do well too. But woe betide the child who is a mathematician but finds that the person teaching maths cannot keep up with the speed at which that child is going, because that child will find it difficult to maximise his potential during that one crucial year when that individual is there in front of him.

What I am saying to the House, and what I hope my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will hear, is that, during the course of the teacher training changes that he is introducing, he should look further than simply at class-based training for the postgraduate teacher, at the quality of the bachelor of education degree, the major qualification these days for our primary school teachers, to see whether something can be done to strengthen the subject and the basis on which people in primary schools teach our children so that it is not simply dictated by a year, by the age of the children or by one class being taken by one person all the way through all the subjects.

We need variety within our primary schools, and we need people who can take their interest, professionalism and grasp of their subject through into the classroom, even for five and six-year-olds. Those children are just as important as children aged 14, 15 and 16 who are entering their examination years. We tend in Britain not to take sufficient account of that.

I welcome the notion that we can have the assistance within our classes of people who are mature, who understand children and who have a genuine interest in trying to improve their knowledge, so that they might be able to impart that knowledge to the children in our classrooms. All those moves are much to be welcomed. I believe more than ever before that the notion of asking young people who are to become teachers to spend their time in the classroom is a principle which we in the House must firm up and follow.

I noticed when I was a Minister in the Department of Education and Science—it is almost inevitable when new legislation is introduced—the tendency of those charged with putting reforms into position to enjoy the proliferation of administrative paperwork. I ask my right hon. Friend to beware, because many will say that an idea is splendid but it needs this, that or the other by way of following up the accreditation, making sure that we administer the measure correctly, that we validate this or test that. All those processes, good as they might be, need to be resisted.

There must be quality assurance, we must know and understand what is happening within classes, but we do not need vast tomes of paper which people have to fill up in order to say whether they have done this, that or the other. I am convinced that systems can be devised which will be satisfactory in terms of quality and understanding what is happening in schools without burdening schools further with great wodges of paper.

I say that because I know perfectly well that the system that we introduced for testing and the curriculum in the days when I was a Minister did burden teachers. I accept responsiblity for that, and always have done. I always knew that, at some stage, we would have to rectify some of those institutions. But in order to drive through the measures that were so important for Britain's schools, we accepted some of the defects that were bound to occur.

In the same way, I am sure that the Bill will bring such huge benefits to the schools and to the teaching profession that we must ensure that we do not overburden people in the process. I am sure that we shall make some mistakes, but that does not matter, because the principle behind the Bill is fundamentally correct for Britain's teaching profession.

5.59 pm

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): The speech of the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) was particularly interesting, and certainly I agreed with a number of her remarks—for example, about the risk of increased bureaucracy and paperwork for schools. As the right hon. Lady well knows, that particularly concerns teachers in respect of much new legislation introduced by this Government.

I agree also with the right hon. Lady that there is a growing need for primary teachers to spend more time specialising in particular subjects so that they can teach them with enthusiasm and excitement—but a problem follows from that in respect of the Bill. As the right hon. Lady hinted, if teacher training is all to be done in the classroom, where will teachers gain the subject expertise and enthusiasm that she says is so desperately needed? That is one of the Bill's major flaws, and I shall return to it later.

The right hon. Lady said that parts of the speech of the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) took her fancy. Few parts of it took my fancy. I wondered how, in educational terms, the right hon. Gentleman would use the stick with the horse's head handle, and to whom—particularly in view of statements by the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans)—the right hon. Gentleman was alluding in his frequent references to dead rabbits or to a dead rabbit.

Remarkably, that brings me to the Secretary of State, whose illuminating speech began with a reference to two anniversaries. The first was 15 years of Conservative rule. The Secretary of State predicted the beginning of another 15 years of Tory rule. I will break the habit of a lifetime and bet the Secretary of State that he is wrong. If he is proved right, I am willing to do that which he promised in respect of other matters—to eat my hat, but garnished. I suspect that the right hon. Gentleman is likely to have to eat his hat in respect of grant-maintained schools earlier than I will have to eat mine in respect of 15 more years of Tory rule.

It was a pity that the Secretary of State referred also to the 50th anniversary of the Butler legislation—the Education Act 1944—because he personally has been

[Mr. Don Foster]

responsible for legislation that has, more than any other, torn up the partnership and co-operation that was the basis of the 1944 Act and which formed, until recent years, the basis of the education service.

The Secretary of State's speech highlighted a number of inconsistencies in his beliefs and statements. He spoke, for example, of the ending of what he called the ivory silo. Not many people would know his meaning. I happen to know, and I am also able to point out that the right hon. Gentleman got his own quotation wrong. I should hate anyone to believe that I have copies of all the Secretary of State's speeches to hand, but I do have the speech that he gave just before Christmas to the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, when he said:

"In this new order, 'ivory towers' will be—indeed, already is—a misnomer. Quality, the 'ivory', will remain. But the isolated, if imposing, ivory towers will be replaced by architecture of all shapes and sizes, from ivory silo to ivory cottage".

The Secretary of State was saying that we would see the birth of ivory silos; yet only a few months later he is saying that they have come to an end. That is typical of so much of the Secretary of State's legislation. Having only just introduced it, he makes significant changes—and that leads to major instability.

It is worrying that the Secretary of State does not seem to understand his own legislative proposals, or even know the name of the new organisation that the Bill is intended to establish. One minute the right hon. Gentleman was telling the House about the formation of the Teacher Training Agency and the next about the establishment of the teacher training authority. In fact, he stressed to his hon. Friends the importance of that word "authority". Whether it be an authority or an agency, the right hon. Member for Brent, North described it as an empire.

In view of the Secretary of State's speech at the Conservative party conference, there can be no question but that the U-turn that he was compelled to make over student unions was one of the most humiliating ever, following the debacle over the mums' army. It appears that common sense has broken out at least in that part of the Bill. Sadly, that is not true of part I, which is unnecessary, unworkable and highly undesirable. I say to the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden that it will do nothing to repair the damage inflicted by the Government on teacher morale and the entire profession.

The changes in part II are the result of the listening done by the Secretary of State and others. I find it difficult to understand why the right hon. Gentleman is not willing to listen in respect of other parts of the Bill. The important question asked time and again is what part II will do to raise the quality of teacher training. We have been given no answer.

I believe that it is true to say that the Secretary of State has not been listening, because I do not know of one organisation that supports his proposals in respect of initial teacher training. I know of not one parent, governor, teacher, higher education college, university or teacher training organisation that supports any of the Bill's proposals.

I ought to declare an interest, in that I spent many years teaching and being involved in curriculum development within schools. I spent 10 years as a teacher trainer at Bristol university, and the many changes that occurred during that time brought about some of the improvements which the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden said were needed, and which are still needed.

Mr. Peter Butler (Milton Keynes, North-East): In the 10 years that the hon. Gentleman spent training teachers, did he ever go into school and do any teaching?

Mr. Foster: The right hon. Member for Brent, North implied that people involved in teacher training do not return to schools to gain further experience at the chalk face. Perhaps the hon. Member for Milton Keynes, North-East (Mr. Butler) is not aware that under the existing Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education there is a requirement that all involved in teacher training have recent and relevant experience. The direct answer to the hon. Gentleman is that I had just that.

Given my experience and my discussions with the organisations that I mentioned, why do I oppose the Bill's proposals for teacher training? I oppose the establishment of yet another quango. Opposition Members have already expressed their concerns about quangos and I am particularly worried about the appointment of yet another eight to 12 faceless men and women.

Mr. Riddick: Two quangos are being abolished and replaced by just one.

Mr. Foster: If the hon. Gentleman cares to look at the status and powers of those two other bodies, he will see that the new body will be taking on considerably greater powers. As the Secretary of State said, one of those bodies has a purely advisory role while the other merely provides information and advice to those wishing to join the profession. There is a huge difference between bodies of that kind and the quango being set up by the Secretary of State. It is worrying that the Bill does not even make it clear what qualifications the chairman of the new quango must have. It is not a specific requirement that he must have had direct experience of teacher training, merely experience of teaching.

I oppose the proposed legislation because I believe that it will create greater fragmentation and bureaucracy, the very thing that the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden is concerned about, and will lead to increased instability. We have heard about the various changes that have taken place in the Government's legislation in recent years, and we should not forget that it was only the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 that set up the Higher Education Funding Council, which is now to be dismembered as a result of the proposals in the Bill.

I oppose the proposed legislation because not a single reason has been given as to why it is so important in England when it does not appear to be necessary in Wales or Scotland. I cannot possibly support any new legislation which, at least on the face of it, is likely to establish a bureaucracy that will increase costs and therefore take money away from direct teacher training work at a time when, as we all admit, some improvements are needed. Perhaps most fundamentally, however, there is no evidence of any need for the changes.

As I have acknowledged in recent years, there have been a number of changes to teacher education. Perhaps the two most notable changes have been the growing partnership that has developed between individual teacher training institutions and the schools with which they liaise. Those

partnerships are important. They are crucial to teacher training, they are already established and they are developing in a variety of interesting ways.

As has been mentioned, there has been a growth in the amount of time that trainee teachers spend in schools. Hon. Members who are anxious to see even more time spent in schools should reflect on why the probationary year has been abolished. It provided postgraduate teacher training as a two-year course, and the whole of one year plus a large proportion of the first year was work in schools.

Have those changes led to any real cause for concern? The answer is that they certainly have not, according to the Government's reports through OFSTED. Reference has been made to its report last year, "The New Teacher in School", which said that

"the teaching of new teachers was satisfactory in almost three quarters of cases."

One could ask, "What about the other quarter? Let us be concerned about that." And I am indeed concerned. But the report went on to say that

"the proportion of very good lessons by new teachers was higher than that for teachers in general."

That indicates to me that there have been improvements in recent years, and that if we make rapid and unnecessary changes now the improvements may be put in jeopardy. I suggest that the lesson to be learnt is, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Yet the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden—for reasons that I do not fully understand, in view of her comments—seems keen on making change for the sake of change.

There are many other reasons why we should oppose the proposed legislation. I am particularly concerned about the way that it will separate educational research from training for the profession, and teacher training from the rest of higher education. I particularly want to explore a specific concern—the amendment to clause 12 that was made in another place. Despite what the Secretary of State said, and while I accept what hon. Members on both Front Benches have said about the need to ensure that the wording is correct, I very much hope that this House will not overturn the principle behind that amendment.

The original proposal for totally school-based teacher training is, in my view, completely daft. It looks almost as though it is the Secretary of State's latest contribution to the "back to basics" debate, and if hon. Members reflect on the appropriate novel they will see that it is a return to the form of teacher training that Nicholas Nickleby received. It is daft because there is no evidence to suggest that it is a good idea. The Government thought that it might be a good idea, so they introduced a trial—the so-called "school-centred initial teacher training". As we have heard, some 200 students are currently involved and, although the Secretary of State did not say so, the figures suggest that that number is likely to rise to some 700 before long. That is a small number compared with the 60,000 students who are training through more traditional and conventional means.

Mr. Boswell: On a point of clarification, the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that some two thirds of those undergoing teacher education in higher education institutions are doing bachelor of education courses, typically for four years, so the true comparison is with those doing postgraduate certificate of education courses, typically for a year, of which even those small figures would be a much higher proportion.

Mr. Foster: I am happy to accept what the Minister says. He is, of course, quite right and I am happy to make that comparison. I am sure that he would still agree, however, that 200 is a small proportion.

The main point of my argument is not so much the proportion involved as the fact that it was set out as a trial and that, so far, no evaluation whatever has been conducted on that new approach. There is thus no evidence on which to base the proposals in the Bill. It seems odd to conduct trials and then, before one has had any results of any evaluation, to go full steam ahead and announce that the proposal is to be extended far more widely. There is no evidence of support from schools wishing to move in that direction. The Minister will immediately intervene and say that he can name schools in Essex and one or two other places that have indicated interest and become involved in the pilot study, and of course that is right. However, there is no evidence whatever of any wider interest in that way forward.

I am sure that the Minister will be aware of the survey carried out at the beginning of this year by the Standing Conference of Principals of Higher Education Colleges, which surveyed 1,500 primary head teachers. The vast majority said no to taking responsibility for student welfare, for the intellectual development of trainees, for improving students' subject knowledge, and for the selection of students. Only 1.7 per cent. of those head teachers wanted a major role in devising programmes or setting course objectives.

One may ask why the head teachers said that. I thought that it was summed up very well by one head teacher, who said:

"Teachers are not trained to train students. They are trained to teach children and there is a vast difference in the skills and knowledge required."

The head teachers went on to express concerns about too many students spending too much time in their schools, causing problems in terms of space, disruption and even diminished standards of pupil behaviour.

The proposal in the Bill will establish a two-tier system of teacher training and, notwithstanding the intervention by the Secretary of State, there will continue to be uncertainty about the nature of qualifications. I suggest to the Secretary of State and his Ministers that, if they are really keen to make genuine improvements in the profession, they could best do that by accepting the proposal from all quarters for the establishment of a general teaching council.

I also ask Ministers to reflect on other aspects of the reports of their own inspectors—for instance, the importance of co-operation between schools and higher education institutions. HMI said in a recent report that the most successful training of articled teachers took place when course structures included

"a substantial period of out-of-school training early in the course and then offered carefully staged introductions to key professional skills and curriculum knowledge."

The report went on to say that training experience in and outside schools was

"designed to inform and build upon each other."

The problem is that the relevant part of the Bill is based on the false premise that we need more school-based teaching. What we need is much more school-focused teacher training; otherwise, we shall end up training people not to join the profession, but simply to teach in a particular school.

[Mr. Foster]

As I have said, there is much to oppose in the Bill, and my hon. Friends and I will oppose it as vigorously as we can. If we cannot persuade the Government to scrap it, we shall present our own amendments with the aim of at least lessening some of its worst excesses. We certainly hope to introduce a "sunset" clause, making the quango that will be established subject to parliamentary reapproval every few years.

In case the Secretary of State and his colleagues will not listen to the arguments advanced by my party—sadly, I suspect that they will not—I refer them to what a former headmaster of Eton had to say in a recent article in *The Independent*:

"John Major's strongly expressed aim to restore the status of teachers is supported by all. Teachers' morale is low, their pay lower than it should be. Both need raising, but John Patten's proposals to overhaul initial teacher education under a free-standing teacher training agency, as set out in part I of the Education Bill now going through Parliament, will have the opposite effect. This new quango is as objectionable and unnecessary as it will prove impractical."

Hear, hear!

6.22 pm

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak briefly, especially as I had many years' experience of teaching before becoming a Member of Parliament. It was interesting to hear the speech of the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster). He and I have at least one thing in common, having both been science teachers. I believe that he taught chemistry—

Mr. Don Foster: Physics.

Mr. Thompson: In that case, we have two things in common: we were both science teachers and we were both teachers of physics.

I began to have less in common with the hon. Gentleman, however, when he began to speak of bureaucracy, quangos and so forth. He referred to the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold). I strongly supported what she said about the need to avoid too much bureaucracy and paperwork in any new reforms. Much to my surprise, the hon. Member for Bath seemed to be accusing the Government of introducing more bureaucracy and quangos in the Bill. Whatever else may be said in favour of the Bill or against it, my understanding is that it will reduce bureaucracy rather than increasing it.

In any event, it ill becomes a leading Liberal spokesman to talk of bureaucracy and quangos: I gather that his party's policy document "Excellence for All", published in 1992, proposed the creation of six or seven new quangos, pay review bodies and the like. Although we have much in common, I must disagree with the hon. Member for Bath on that point.

I am one of the hon. Members who have pressed for a reform of teacher training for a long time. Many hon. Members—probably on both sides of the House—feel that the subject should have been considered earlier, perhaps before some of the other reforms introduced by the Government. I am glad that we are finally debating a Bill that will deal with it, and congratulate the Government on presenting that Bill.

The hon. Member for Bath said that some improvements had been made in teacher training recently. I support the Bill, and believe that reform is needed urgently along the lines that it suggests. However, I agree with Opposition Members who have drawn attention to recent improvements. I cannot go all the way with them, but I think it unfair to imply that there have been no improvements in the past 10 years. That flies in the face of the facts. I may part company with Opposition Members, however, when I say that there is still much that is wrong and that measures are still needed to reform teacher training.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) made an entertaining speech. I always enjoy listening to my right hon. Friend. As always, with his experience of teaching and running schools, he brought common sense to bear on the subject. How right he was to speak of the importance of good classroom teaching. I am not a lawyer, and I do not intend to speak at length and in detail about the various clauses in the Bill, but I believe that the Government are right to place more emphasis on training in the classroom. My right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North made that point very effectively.

The hon. Member for Bath—perhaps it was someone else, but if so, the hon. Gentleman will correct me—said that it was not always best to learn from other teachers. I do not agree. Of course teacher trainees must listen to university lecturers and others outside the school system and of course their education must be much more broadly based than the simple learning of practical skills in the classroom. I do not think, however, that the classroom is the wrong place for them to learn. My right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North spoke of a brilliant special needs teacher in his school, saying that it was possible to learn a fantastic amount just by observing him, talking to him and helping him with his class. I do not go along with those who play down the importance of learning in the classroom, with good classroom teachers.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Will the hon. Gentleman suggest what limits should be placed on the number of teachers who watch such brilliant, demonstrative people in the classroom at any one time and tell us how many teachers can take part in the lesson—learning and being taught at the same time?

Mr. Thompson: I shall not yield to the temptation of answering that question, for two reasons. First, I made it plain that I did not wish to deal with the detail of the Bill, or the administrative implications, in my short speech. Secondly—I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree with me here—I am strongly against excessive interference by those of us who are outside schools in what is done by head teachers, departmental heads and individual teachers. *[Interruption.]* I am answering the hon. Gentleman. I suspect that he will support me when I resist the temptation to start laying down the law. My point was much simpler: a student teacher—indeed, a qualified, experienced teacher—can learn from colleagues in the classroom. The Government are right to place more emphasis on classroom-based teaching, but no doubt that point can be debated further.

Ms Estelle Morris (Birmingham, Yardley): If the hon. Gentleman is a supporter of school-based teacher training, does he share with me a concern that we will not have good teachers if students gain experience at only one school during their teacher training? Is it not true that most other training courses which are based in universities have the advantage of allowing students to do training at a

minimum of two schools? Would the hon. Gentleman care to reflect on the implications for teacher training of the number of placements that a student may get?

Mr. Thompson: My speech will be prolonged if I respond at length to that question. I said a few moments ago that I am very much in favour of young people coming into the profession having broad experience—I used those very words. I will not say that a teacher should train in only one school. Never mind what the Bill says, I am talking about teacher training as I believe it should be. I am in favour of school-based training. Opposition Members are supporting my general remarks, so I shall continue down that path.

Mr. Enright *rose—*

Mr. Thompson: I will make a little more progress with my speech and then I will give way to the hon. Gentleman. We have addressed this topic, but no doubt I will tempt the hon. Gentleman again in a moment and then he can make his point.

With regard to the speech by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North, my wife and I are interesting cases in point. I was a graduate teacher who did no teacher training. You look horrified at that remark, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it is true nevertheless. I do not advocate that people should not undertake teacher training but I make the point that as a graduate teacher, for one reason or another —as my right hon. Friend mentioned—I did not do teacher training. I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House will bear that fact in mind and therefore take with a pinch of salt anything I may say about teacher training.

My wife, on the other hand, was an excellent teacher who was teacher trained but not a graduate. That is why I remarked in an intervention earlier that, whatever new system we may bring in, there are many excellent teachers in our schools who are not graduates. I think that it is right to pay tribute to them and I join my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden in paying tribute to the many good teachers in our classrooms.

As a Member of Parliament, I receive many letters from teachers who say, "Why do the Government never praise good teachers?" I then send them quotations from the Secretary of State, his predecessors and his colleagues on the Front Bench, all of whom have praised teachers at one time or another—perhaps not as much as some teachers may like, but they have done it. The media and the press —there may be someone in the Press Gallery, but I very much doubt it at this time of the evening—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The Gallery does not exist as far as the hon. Gentleman is concerned.

Mr. Thompson: I did remember, but it was too late. The media outside rarely pick up compliments that the Secretary of State and his colleagues pay to teachers or anyone else.

I turn to the main point in what was originally intended to be a brief speech. There is a tension in the debate about the Bill, which will come through in the Committee as well, concerning the need to rid education of trendy nostrums—the ivory tower syndrome to which we referred earlier. Some hon. Members may feel that that has gone, but my attention was drawn only a few moments ago to a letter that Mr. Tom Cornish wrote to the recent newsletter of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers—an organisation of which I was once a member, although it had a different name in those days. Mr. Cornish said:

"on my PGCE course three years ago I quickly realised that the compulsory lectures delivered by uninspiring and politicised staff did not merit any note-taking at all. At the end of the course I copied sections out of ridiculous books for essays that I wrote with no conviction. All the useful training, reflection and sharing of experience took place within schools, and days at college were only valuable as a mental respite from the rigours of teaching practice."

That is obviously an isolated case and I have said already that I do not want to attack teacher training institutions. I merely quote from the letter to ensure that people realise that a problem remains and that the Government are right to look at it. There is tension between those of us who say that there is a problem to be addressed in teacher training and those who, quite rightly, believe that there is a need for teachers to have high standards of academic training and status.

That is where our institutions of higher education—our universities—have a role to play. In the debate about clause 12 and related clauses, members of the Standing Committee will try to address the problem: how can we get away from the ivory tower syndrome? Many young people whom I have taught have gone into teacher training and praised that training, but many others have come away from teacher training and said what a nonsense it was.

Mr. Enright *rose—*

Mr. Thompson: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment. Tension arises in addressing that problem —I think that the Government are correct to look at it— while recognising that teachers need to have high academic standards. By definition—I am sure that the Government accept that view—those standards can be met only through universities and colleges of higher education.

Mr. Enright: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I am most intrigued by his reference to the ivory tower—or ivory silo, if it comes to that. What is an ivory tower in this context? What makes it self-evident that someone is living in an ivory tower? What are the nostrums that the hon. Gentleman talked about? How are they self-evident? What proof does he have that they are failing?

Mr. Thompson: That sounds like the sort of intervention that my colleagues who will serve on the Standing Committee should address. I would be very unpopular with all hon. Members if I were to digress on the subject of ivory towers or ivory silos.

In an earlier intervention, I referred to the leading article in *The Times* today, which gave strong support to the main purposes of the Bill. It also referred to a concept that has the support of both sides of the House. For a long time, I have advocated the establishment of a professional teachers council. Opposition Members have referred to the General Teaching Council and spoken of their support for that concept. However, I have a problem with that idea.

The Government, quite rightly, see some of the recent proposals for a general teachers council as a kind of talking shop—a son of Burnham. Those of us who experienced the old Burnham process would shy away from anything that remotely resembled the gathering called the Burnham committee. I would certainly run a mile from such a process, and that was my view long before I became a Member of Parliament.

[Mr. Thompson]

The idea has been advanced for a professional teachers body, although not necessarily the General Teaching Council. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education is listening, because I am trying to make a distinction between what I am advocating and the General Teaching Council. I believe that there should be some sort of professional teachers body. It should not be a talking shop and not necessarily be any of the proposals that have been advanced recently, but we need a council to formulate and enforce a code of conduct, to advise teachers on their terms of employment and methods of classroom assessment and so on.

In the same way that other professions have their professional bodies, I put on record my general support for some sort of professional body for teachers. Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North, I believe that teachers' pay is important, but it is not the only thing that affects teachers' status. That is why I raise again the question of some sort of professional body for teachers.

We need to ensure that teachers—whether school-based or college-based—are able to instruct their pupils in the basic skills to the very highest standards—the three Rs, or whatever one likes to call them. As an ex-physics teacher, I attach great importance to basic standards in English and mathematics. I also believe in high standards in academic subjects, for example, a language or a science. The Government have been right all along to speak out for high standards in the face of those who are always trying to "level down" and bring the mediocre into our schools. They have been right to strive for higher academic standards and higher standards generally and we also want teachers to teach vocational, technical and craft skills to the highest standards.

I am arguing for rigour in teaching and teacher training because there is a risk of a lack of rigour. The hon. Member for Bath was a physics teacher and I am sure that he will agree that there is a tendency for pupils to go for the easier option, the soft subject. I have made myself unpopular by referring to some degree courses that I regard as soft subjects, but there are many.

Mr. Butler: Name them.

Mr. Thompson: What about social sciences for a start? I shall not go any further because I am taking a grave risk. I know that members of all parties share the view that there is a need for rigour in education. Again, I must be careful when I say that those of us who follow the media and read the newspapers—far be it from me to criticise them—know that there is a great deal of shallow thinking about. The only way to put that right is to increase rigour in education.

I hope that the Bill will build on the Government's education reforms of the 1980s, which were a long-overdue revolution in the interests of children, parents and teachers. No doubt the wilder elements—I choose my words carefully—of the National Union of Teachers will continue to sing a lament for the trendy education nostrums, unstructured teaching and the low standards of attainment and discipline of the 1960s, but, fortunately, all that is now irrelevant. The task now is to build logically on what has been achieved since 1988. Evolution, not revolution, is the order of the day and the Bill must be part of that detailed evolutionary process. I hope that my colleagues will listen carefully to responsible voices in the teaching profession who want them to get it right. I support the Bill.

6.42 pm

Ms Estelle Morris (Birmingham, Yardley): I was about to say that the speech made by the hon. Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) was a measured one but that was before his comment about social science degrees. As someone with such a degree, I shall refrain from saying what I had intended to say.

As the Secretary of State said, today is the 15th anniversary of the election of the 1979 Conservative Government. I had not woken up thinking about that this morning—it is not a date that I put in my diary—but it reminds me that tomorrow must be the 15th anniversary of Mrs. Thatcher's famous speech made on the steps of No. 10 Downing street when she said:

"Where there is error, may we bring truth."

The Bill, introduced 15 years after the election of a Conservative Government, does nothing to bring truth but simply perpetuates error in the Government's education policy.

The right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) described some of the scenes that she saw in classrooms. She described students as pathetic creatures by virtue of the way in which they were being taught. I was left wondering why someone who had held ministerial office in the then Department of Education had not taken steps long ago to put right teacher training if she felt that it was that bad. I am inclined to believe that she was making a generalisation based on something that she had seen and of which she did not approve. The same fault can be attributed to a number of Conservative Members. Nothing is perfect is this life, and I am not the person to say that teacher training is perfect, but to take isolated examples and extrapolate from them a need for a new Bill is not worthy of Government.

The Bill owes its existence more to the Department for Education's obsession with legislation than to any need to change initial teacher training drastically. There is no doubt that in the past two decades since I did my teacher training there have been steady and significant improvements. There is now closer integration with the rest of higher education, a proposal that I believe emanated from the days when Baroness Thatcher was Secretary of State for Education, and from the James report. We have witnessed the introduction of an all-graduate profession, and there is greater emphasis on teacher trainers themselves having teaching experience. We no longer recruit teachers from the ranks of those who failed to get graduate degree places, and teaching has been put firmly where it belongs—in the mainstream of higher education.

In picking out the improvements that have been made to teacher training, I give credit to the measures introduced by the Conservative Government. Their actions, and those introduced by a Labour Government, have brought about a steadier improvement than we saw in the 1950s and 1960s. However, the Bill is a backward step. It reflects the historic notion that teaching can be learnt in the workplace—the old monitorial system—and not the reality, which is that teaching is a complex and changing business.

The speech of the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson), which many hon. Members found humorous, was sad. He offered us reminiscences through the history of education but, if he really believes that we

can draw on that history and learn lessons for the future of teaching, he is sadly mistaken. He told us a story about a group of children of whom he had charge and who were excluded from the curriculum and sent out of school every day. He told us about the antics that he had to perform —for example, climbing drainpipes—in order to get the respect of those children. If he believes that such things are still happening in schools and that it what we are training teachers for, he is sadly out of touch with education in the 1990s.

Today, all children are part of the national curriculum. They should all be taking GCSEs and we have the highest expectations of every one of them. We want them to continue in education for as long as possible. There are no lessons to be learnt from the teachers of the 1950s and 1960s who were in the same position as the right hon. Member for Brent, North. We do not want those lessons. We want a realisation that teaching needs to be innovative and that it is complex and demanding. We are discussing training for that job, not training for the job that the right hon. Member did two, three and four decades ago.

The Bill's flaw is a serious misunderstanding of what is needed to make an effective teacher. Teaching is not only about a set of skills that one can practise until one has got it right. One cannot divide teaching into competencies that can be ticked when they have been mastered—one can or cannot hold the chalk, or one can or cannot write on the board. There is not a single body of knowledge that is the key to success. Most important, teaching is about understanding how children learn and how they succeed. It is about understanding that the way in which a school organises itself can affect whether a child can learn successfully, that what a child goes home to at night and what his family are like can affect whether he succeeds and that the environment and community in which his family live and in which the school operates determines whether he can be successful.

Mr. Butler: All that the hon. Lady says is correct but does she really believe that it can be taught only in the lecture theatre rather than by experience in the classroom?

Ms Morris: Of course not. Labour Members have been saying that such things are taught by a combination of theory and practice. Conservatives Members are saying that teacher training can be solely school-based and left to the charge of schools. It is they who are seeking to divorce theory from practice, not Opposition Members.

Before that interruption, I was referring to matters that are grounded in educational theory. Successful teacher education combines theory and practice and sees one reflected in the other.

Universities must work closely with schools. I am not in favour of isolating teachers in universities, but the Bill shifts the emphasis from universities to schools in a way that gets the relationship between the two wrong. The title of part I—"Teacher Training"—best sums up the misunderstanding of those who propose it. People cannot be trained to be teachers. Teachers are not technicians or apprentices learning a trade. They need to learn facts and processes. They have to be adaptable and innovative, but that will not be achieved if teacher education is divorced from the rest of higher education, as is being done here.

During my years in teaching, one of the things that I wanted most but did not happen—it still does not happen —was a period out of the classroom to reflect on what I had been doing. I wanted time out to reflect on the practice, to go back to the theory, the ideas—the ideology, if that is how some hon. Members want to think of it—and see how they mixed. I had such opportunities only when I was training to be a teacher. During the years of training, the opportunity to go into school and be the practitioner but also to talk, receive support and go over what one had done, adapting it and going back to the classroom and improving, was extremely valuable. We should be giving more teachers that opportunity, rather than taking it away from students who are training to be teachers.

One aspect of the Bill is the arrogant assumption that schools want to be, and can be, bases for school-centred courses. A school is primarily a place to teach children, not a place to teach teachers. Teachers are not trained to teach teachers, although they have a valuable role to play. Most teachers are not trained even to teach adults. Why should our best teachers be taken away from the classroom to teach people who could be better taught elsewhere? If we are not to perpetuate the inadequacies that still exist in some schools, the people who teach teachers in schools must be the best practitioners. Otherwise we shall fossilise poor teaching and fail to improve things. My choice is to have the best teachers teaching the pupils, and not the teachers. The Bill will, of necessity, draw those people away from that important and fundamental task.

Mr. Butler: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for allowing me to intervene, rather than interrupt, for a second time. She is quite correct to say that the best teachers should be in the classroom. Should not those seeking to emulate them be able to watch them, as is proposed in the Bill?

Ms Morris: I do not know when the hon. Gentleman was last in a school or last went to a teacher education course. In the teaching experience part of university courses, the first thing that one does is to sit in and watch teachers taking lessons. There is a great difference between that situation, in which the student remains the responsibility of the lecturer, and the student being the responsibility of the teacher. The latter puts on teachers an onus that is burdensome and prevents them from doing their work with the pupils.

Lady Olga Maitland: The hon. Lady may have missed the point about the whole principle of a trainee teacher going into schools. For years, trainee teachers have been complaining that their courses are so bound up in theory that they never learn the art of classroom management. *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members are wrong. Trainee teachers complain bitterly that they have not been getting experience that they badly need. If Opposition Members want an example, let me refer them to a teacher called Maria Foster, who, at St. Peter's high school in Gloucester, was involved in one of these teacher-based courses. She gave great credit for the chance to be in the classroom, where she felt that she would benefit most.

Ms Morris: It is quite clear—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Lady, from whom we have just had a very long intervention, should have the courtesy to listen to the answer. That is perhaps the best example of the fact that we still have error rather than truth. If the hon. Lady knows of one educational institution that trains teachers without putting them in the classroom, she ought to report it immediately to the Secretary of State for Education. Any institution doing so would be acting without the law. Being

[Ms Morris]

in schools is experience of teaching. I do not know anyone who has followed a course accrediting him or her to be a teacher without having had practice in the classroom. If the hon. Lady does, she ought to do something about it.

Mr. Jamieson: Does my hon. Friend agree that if the "mums' army" proposal had not been thrown out, quite rightly, by the House of Lords, potential teachers could have found themselves being taught by people who were themselves barely qualified?

Ms Morris: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comment. Perhaps he ought to keep quiet about that. As it seems a good way of saving money, the Secretary of State might take it up.

I want to return to what is wrong about putting the emphasis on placing teacher training in schools. Not only does that disrupt the work of schools and of good teachers, but—this is more important—schools may not be able to provide the necessary consistency and coherence. A recent OFSTED report on articled teachers—a school-based teacher training scheme—discovered

"The degree of inconsistency was more evident than in conventional PGCE courses. Schools and teachers varied in the nature and quality of support they provided. Weaknesses also arose from poor school placements, badly designed courses and inefficient management."

Those comments could well be the verdict on the school-based teacher education that might be introduced as a result of the Bill. At present, the Further Education Funding Council provides the quality control and assurance. The Bill will remove teacher education from that successful structure.

The current link between higher education and schools is good not only for students but for schools. Students and teacher trainers bring to schools new ideas and materials. Indeed, the link between schools and higher education that is part of the current arrangements can contribute to a school's professional development.

The Bill is so unnecessary that one must assume that there is more to it than meets the eye. An intervention by the hon. Member for—*[Interruption.]*—Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) confirmed my worst fears. For a moment I forgot what constituency the hon. Lady represents but was helped out by one of my hon. Friends. How I forgot I do not know. The Bill reflects the Government's deep prejudice against what they see as the educational establishment. We have heard from various Secretaries of State—most recently last week from the Home Secretary—expressions of suspicion that teachers educated in so-called left-wing trendy universities are responsible for lowering standards and corrupting our youth.

Once again, having identified the wrong problem, the Government, through the Bill, have come up with the same old solution, much loved and readily grasped by them, "Let's give power to the Secretary of State and let's appoint a quango." The Govenrnment now suffer from a serious malady—"quangoitis" or what my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Pope) called quango mania. The Secretary of State has given us two quangos in two years. In fact, he has more power to hand out jobs than do some jobcentres.

The ranks of the Tory faithful must again be expectant at the prospect of even more appointments coming their way by gift of the Secretary of State for Education. The right hon. Gentleman already controls what is taught and how it is assessed. Now he wants to control how the teachers are taught and which courses should be funded. Never has there been a Secretary of State for Education who has striven so successfully to achieve political correctness.

No one is saying that initial teacher training is perfect. There are real difficulties. There are real problems to be overcome. There are difficulties in combining theory and practice effectively. For example, how can we teach young teachers to motivate children who come from homes that place little or no value on education, or to exert effective discipline over 40 small children? How can we constantly remind teachers to place firmly within their ideology the fact that their expectations of a child will be a crucial element in that child's success? Those difficulties must at the very least be described as a challenge for those who have to address the issue of teacher training.

However, the Bill will not help to meet that challenge. By isolating student teachers from other graduates, by failing to realise that effective teachers master the process that links theory with practice and by placing a burden on schools that will detract from their main purpose, the Bill fails to meet the only criterion by which it can be judged —whether it will improve effective teaching and learning in our schools. The Bill makes no contribution to that task, which is the task of all of us. For those reasons, it does not deserve the support of the House.

7 pm

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): I shall begin with a couple of comments about the two Front-Bench speeches.

I was slightly concerned to hear my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State say that the Bill represents the last piece of the jigsaw. I believe that there is still more work to be done. We need to complete the process of freeing educational institutions from the control of local education authorities. We started the process with the polytechnics —the universities already had their freedom—and we continued it with sixth form and further education colleges. It is now time that we did the same with all secondary schools.

My right hon. Friend may remember—although he probably does not—that on Second Reading of the Education Bill of 1993 I argued that we should turn all secondary schools into grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Patten: I remember.

Mr. Riddick: My right hon. Friend kindly says that he remembers my speech; I am pleased to hear that.

I believe that we should turn all secondary schools into grant-maintained schools, so that effectively they would compete as autonomous schools, albeit within the state sector. I think that education policy is going down that route anyway. The benefits to be obtained from grant-maintained status are now well known, and it will be difficult for the Labour party to argue at the next general election that it would abolish all grant-maintained schools.

As for the speech delivered from the Opposition Front Bench, it was interesting to hear the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) wriggling so tremendously when challenged about her position on the National Union of Teachers' boycott of tests. Now that Sir Ron Dearing has

made appropriate changes, I see no excuse for such behaviour by any of the teaching unions. Yet the hon. Member for Dewsbury refused to condemn the test boycotts proposed by the NUT. She should be ashamed of herself; her refusal to condemn the NUT was disgraceful. It is pathetic, and an indictment of the Labour party, that it feels unable to condemn a teaching union that recommends such disreputable action. It shows, I suppose, that the Labour party is still in the pocket of the trade unions.

Most of the speeches in the debate so far have concentrated on the teacher-training aspects of the Bill, so I shall concentrate on the second part of the Bill, which relates to student unions. [HON. MEMBERS: "Surprise, surprise."] I am sure that my right hon. Friend will be delighted to hear that. He may remember that I initiated an Adjournment debate on the subject in June 1992.

Last December I had the pleasure of speaking to Conservative students at Hull university. Before the meeting I went into the student union shop to buy a newspaper, only to find that *The Sun* and *The Daily Star* were banned on the ground that they were sexist. *[Interruption.]* That censorship had been ordered by the student union executive, and Opposition Members may be interested to know that it was supported by the Labour students. Indeed, I heard one or two hon. Members shout, "Hear, hear," when I said that *The Sun* and *The Daily Star* had been banned for being sexist.

Mr. Enright: Does the hon. Gentleman believe that the pictures displayed on page 3 of *The Sun* and *The Daily Star* are the sort of thing that we should put before our children? Or does he agree with the students that we should set a moral tone, and that such perversion should not be thrust into our homes?

Mr. Riddick: I am interested to hear that the hon. Gentleman is in favour of censorship. I am not sure that students would be altogether pleased by his referring to them as children. I should have thought that once they are beyond the age of 18 they are old enough to decide for themselves whether to read those newspapers. Indeed, if they are offended by such pictures, they do not have to look at them. It is as easy as that. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman never looks at the offending pictures, does he?

Mr. Enright: I never look at those rags, not even wrapped round fish and chips.

Mr. Butler: In view of the recent change in the editorial policy of *The Sun*, does my hon. Friend not agree that a ban on it throughout the country might be advantageous?

Mr. Riddick: My hon. Friend makes an interesting suggestion, but I do not believe in censorship, so I want to see *The Sun* on sale, despite any reservations that I may have about it now. Incidentally, my hon. Friends may be interested to know that at Hull university I would have been able to buy a copy of a rag called *Socialist Worker*, which was on sale at the entrance to the student union when I went in.

I had also visited Hull students union the year before; my speech cannot have been all that bad, because I was invited back the following year to speak to the Conservative students again. The first year, I was threatened with physical violence because I had had the temerity to point out in my speech—I suppose it was a slightly provocative or controversial speech—that the implementation of socialism by the communists in eastern Europe, China, Africa and Asia had caused more misery, poverty and death than the Nazis under Hitler ever managed to achieve. A small minority of left-wing students did not like my message, so they threatened me with violence. Such unrepresentative behaviour gives students as a whole a bad name, and that is most unfortunate.

There are many examples of abuses perpetrated by student unions and the NUS. Innumerable left-wing causes have been supported, anti-abortionists have been victimised, and even the IRA has received support from within the student union movement.

Mr. Pope: I am sorry to hear that the hon. Gentleman was threatened at Hull university—the university that I attended—but does he accept that he was threatened or intimidated, not by the student union itself, but by members of it? It is important to draw that distinction.

Mr. Riddick: I accept that distinction, and I intend to deal with that aspect of the matter.

My next example comes from somewhere not far from the hon. Gentleman's constituency. The Conservative association at Lancaster university was fined £400 by the students union there because it had the nerve to suggest that the student union's commercial activities could be organised in a more orderly and effective way.

So far as I am concerned, individual students can say or do whatever they wish. However, I object when a small number of students do and say extreme or absurd things in the name of all students, and at the taxpayer's expense. I also object to the fact that young people who go to study in institutions of higher education find that they have to belong to the local student union. The fact that they have no choice is a shocking state of affairs. I do not suppose that it is a state of affairs about which Opposition Members care very much, but I think that it is a serious matter.

Many students have complained to me about the student closed shop. More than 200 Members of Parliament signed an early-day motion calling for the student closed shop to be abolished, and 50 or so Members attended the Adjournment debate, which was an indication of the interest and concern felt in the House about abuses in the student union closed shop. Students should have the freedom to decide for themselves whether they wish to belong to their local student union. We have abolished the trade union closed shop; it is time to abolish the student union closed shop as well. That is what the Bill, albeit in its truncated form, is intended to do.

The Bills's original intention of splitting the political and campaigning activities from the provision of services was the right approach. It would have given individual students the right to opt into the political aspects of student union activities, while, at the same time, allowing all students to enjoy the benefits currently provided by student unions. It would certainly have maximised choice. Unfortunately, the dinosaur defenders of the status quo have managed to blunt the original intention.

First, the officials in the Department for Education produced proposals, which, in my view, were too complicated and too bureaucratic. Of course, it is fair to point out that the officials in that same Department were also responsible for producing proposals in relation to the implementation of the national curriculum, which were too complicated and too bureaucratic. It is time that the officials in the Department learnt their lesson from that.

[Mr. Riddick]

Secondly, the vice-chancellors and others in the House of Lords—

Mr. Patten: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Riddick: Yes, of course.

Mr. Patten: I thank my hon. Friend for giving way. His is one of the best speeches that I have heard all evening. It is only Ministers who decide and only Ministers who are responsible. So, if my hon. Friend has strictures, his lash must be aimed at my back or at the back of my predecessors and not at my splendid officials at the Department for Education.

Mr. Riddick: I do not want to be one of those who is having a go at my right hon. Friend. I have—*[Interruption.]* I have a great deal of respect for him and I like him very much. I, for one, think that he is doing a jolly good job. [*Laughter.*] Perhaps improvements in the Bill concerning student unions could be made. None the less, I stand by what I have just said.

I was talking about dinosaur defenders. The vice-chancellors and others in the House of Lords who represent the vested interests of the higher education establishment did their best to deny their students more choice. From their ivory towers, they were unable to recognise the important principle of freedom of association that was being made available to students. I regret that the protection of vested interests has become more important in the House of Lords in recent years than the offering of expert advice and opinion.

The Bill, as amended, will in practice, I fear, change very little in the world of student unions, but at least it embodies the principle that students can choose whether they wish to belong to the student union. My understanding is that, with the Bill as it is drafted, those choosing not to join a student union will not be able to use the current facilities provided. Such students will not even have a proportion of fees paid on their behalf to the union returned to them. Making such a payment to individual students who opt out is something that should be considered by my right hon. and hon. Friends, and perhaps we could consider it in Committee.

Students who opt out are likely to do so because they do not wish the student union to campaign or make political statements on their behalf. They may, however, wish to use the bar or the cafeteria or the student welfare facilities. At the moment, they will not necessarily be able to do so. Therefore, I believe that the Bill needs to be amended so that all students, regardless of membership of the union, have access to the facilities. Indeed, we should be considering how we can strip away the political and campaigning activities of student unions so that those students who wish to be involved in such activities have to take a positive decision to join the appropriate body, separate from the student union, and use their own money, not taxpayers' money. Theoretically, of course, the charitable status of student unions means that they should not be involved in political activity. In practice, many student unions are involved. Therefore, the Bill should stress the responsibility of governing bodies to ensure that the charity laws are complied with in general and that political activity is not permitted in particular.

Mr. Don Foster: Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House what funds he believes that institutions of higher education should use to pay for their membership of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals?

Mr. Riddick: I am not quite sure of the relevance of that point. It is—*[Interruption.]* I suppose that it is typical that one hears an intervention which is of no interest—[*Laughter.*]—which contributes nothing to the debate.

Mr. Foster: It is of interest to this particular debate.

Mr. Riddick: It is of no interest to this particular debate.

Mr. Foster: It is of interest.

Mr. Riddick: No, it is of no interest to this particular debate, but then the Liberals—

Mr. Enright: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Riddick: No. As we know, the Liberals—

Mr. Enright: I want to help the hon Member.

Mr. Riddick: If the hon. Gentleman wants to help me, I shall give way to him.

Mr. Enright: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman, and I shall try to speak in simple words. Does the hon. Gentleman consider that the position of the NUT and testing is more a part of the debate than he considered the subject on which the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) has just asked him a question to be part of the debate?

Mr. Riddick: You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, may be interested to know that, in Yorkshire, there is a television programme that goes out on the BBC every Sunday afternoon called—I think—"North of Westminster". The hon. Gentleman was putting in his bid to get on that programme this Sunday. We all know that he is a bit of a smart Alec, but he is not being very smart in this case. I should have thought that he would recognise that I was making two very different points. At the beginning of my speech, I made reference to the point to which he has just referred, but the part of my speech that I am currently addressing relates to student unions. The hon. Member for Bath raised a completely separate issue, and I hope that the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) was able to understand that point.

We should be considering the possibility of establishing a student ombudsman. At the moment, when abuses occur, if charitable law is broken, concerned students have to go to the courts to put a stop to the abuse. It would be extremely useful for students to be able to appeal to an impartial individual who would not be in any way involved with the institution where abuses had occurred. We could set up a post for an individual along the lines of those of the commissioner for trade union rights. Alternatively, a more appropriate approach may be to ensure that an official in the Charity Commission is designated as responsible for student union issues.

I wish to make a point concerning external organisations. We need to consider the donations and commercial payments that some student unions make to outside organisations, because some of them are often disguised affiliations to or means of support for political or other organisations. The NUS is certainly the most obvious example of that. We should not forget that at the last election the NUS targeted 70 marginal seats with the clear

intention of helping the Labour party. The NUS has announced its intention of becoming a charity. We have not heard much about that in recent months, and I look forward to hearing more about it. Indeed, I look forward to the day when the NUS is a charity.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Riddick: No. I shall bring my remarks to an end. I am pleased that we shall have the opportunity of debating the Bill in Committee. I am sorry that it is not as it was when it was presented to the other place, but as it provides for voluntary membership of student unions, I am happy to support it.

7.19 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): In some respects, I am happy to take up the remarks of the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick). Having read his biographical details, I understand that he was once a student at one of the universities at which I was a student. I do not know which department he was in at Warwick or what degree he obtained there, but it is clear that something bad happened to him there that left him with a festering discontent with higher education, the vice-chancellors and student unions—the whole lot. Something happened in the hon. Gentleman's past that led to his fetish about student unions.

The Secretary of State said in an intervention that the hon. Gentleman's speech was the best contribution that he had heard to the debate. Nevertheless, I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will stand firm and support what has happened in the other place. The Bill is a compromise, and life is all about compromise. Progress is made only by compromise. I hope that we can all support the compromise that is before us. I think that most Conservative Members who have spoken would be of that opinion. The Secretary of State is right to take that view.

All teachers these days have been students. Some members of student unions go on to teach. Why do they bother to train to teach? The answer lies in the spirit of education. A child—we have not talked too much about children this afternoon—who is deprived of even an adequate education will not stand a chance of succeeding in life. That matters a great deal to everyone, irrespective of whether he or she is a parent.

We must ensure that teachers are trained. In turn, they must ensure that the children in their charge try hard at school. Teachers must make children work hard at school. It is crucial that children are pushed to the limit.

We are told in the Bill that its enactment will lead to no net cost. Whenever I read that statement in a Bill, I am suspicious. There is a draft Bill in my name on an unrelated matter that contains the same statement. There are gross costs around somewhere, and I am sure that they will be found when the Bill's provisions are implemented.

When it comes to education, there is no anti-tax mood among the British people, irrespective of the party to which they belong. Any party that sought to tap into such an anti-tax mood would be in for a nasty shock. I think that education is underfunded as a whole within the Government's expenditure programme. More resources should be put into it. Many take that view but, whether inside or outside the House, there is no unanimity when it comes to priorities.

My priorities would be smaller classes and increased pre-school provision before extra salaries for teachers, for trained teachers or better trained teachers. That is my personal view. I do not deny that higher salaries would lead to higher pupil achievement, but they would have to be tied to specific programmes and policies.

We must attract the best graduates into teaching, and no doubt higher salaries would have a part in that. So would staff development, a properly funded mentor teaching programme, properly funded bilingual teacher training, and improved maths and science teacher training. Such developments would all cost money, but they are all part of the overall programme.

We must acknowledge the importance of retaining experienced teachers in difficult or disadvantaged areas. There are good schools in such areas, but we would be naive not to realise that special help is needed to retain experienced staff and maintain a good level of specialist support in difficult schools in deprived areas. In other words, across-the-board pay increases would not do in a nation as diverse and unequal as ours in terms of education and social progress.

It is vital that we create a good schools programme for teachers. Unfortunately, the Bill will not take us to that. Having succeeded in getting his hand on the legislative lever this year, the Secretary of State could have embarked on that course. As my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms Morris) said, if the root of all evil in 1979 was perceived to be what had gone wrong with teachers in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, why are we only starting in 1994 to put things right? In that sense, the Bill is a missed opportunity.

My response would have been different if the Secretary of State had produced a good schools programme and said, "We shall have a learning guarantee and ensure that teachers are trained to deliver it. We shall ensure that all our schools improve their performance every year in a measurable way because our teachers will be better trained. Better training will ensure that every school improves its performance in a measurable way each year."

Having better trained teachers—intelligent people—would lead us to say that simplistic and inaccurate league tables are not the right approach. Instead, we would construct a system to measure the education distance travelled by pupils each year within a school. That is how the progress of a school should be measured.

I would have no compunction in arguing that the distance travelled in those terms could trigger extra cash for a school. That could be used as a trigger mechanism. I make no bones about that. I could not say to better trained teachers that we would continue with simplistic and inaccurate league tables.

Parents are extremely interested in these matters. Unlike national health service consultants' merit pay, a school's entire performance must be known to the entire community. It will get through to the Secretary of State one day that he has taken the wrong course. There is an alternative approach that could result in cross-party support and support from parents and teachers, and that means finding a way of measuring the distance travelled in education terms by pupils, and therefore by schools, over a year. People want the best for their community, for their school and above all, as individuals and families, the best for their children.

I see no problem in advancing the cause of fixed-term, well-paid contracts for some head teachers, or all heads.

[Mr. Jeff Rooker]

We should not rule out that approach in the search for policy progress. We must take education seriously, and search for the right motivators. I know that that may cause problems among some head teachers, but I would have no compunction about doing it. Ultimately, we rely on the head teachers to ensure that teachers perform.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Yardley described so well, we rely on head teachers under the existing system. Judging by their existing input into teacher training, anyone would think that schools, heads and teachers were not involved in teacher training, but they are. It seems that the refusal of Ministers to admit that has led them to introduce this misguided Bill.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Mr. Robin Squire): As usual, the hon. Gentleman is making an interesting speech and I do not want to interrupt his flow. I agree with him on the importance of measuring progress. I should like him to develop the issue a little further, although that means taking him back to where he was in his speech two minutes ago. Surely the only way that we can satisfactorily measure progress is by regular testing at appropriate ages. If we do not test, against what measurement and achievement can we measure the children—something that he and I agree that it is important to do?

Mr. Rooker: I do not want to be diverted from the main subject. The issue raised by the Minister is for another day, but I do not want to run away from it. There is no dissension between my hon. Friends and me, or between Opposition and Conservative Members, but Conservative Members have chosen the wrong test—a narrow test.

If we are to measure the distance that a child travels during the year or during his period at school, we must know where he originally started. We are not agreed on the way to do that. If we use only simple, narrow tests at one-off times, as under the Government arrangements, we shall not be able to measure the distance travelled by the child or the school. We can then look at output simply in terms of examinations, which pay no heed to the original state, which is crucial.

I represent a part of Birmingham that is setting a target under its excellent new chief education officer. Every school has to measure progress during the year; every school has to do better. We have not set a target for the whole city, as that would be ludicrous for a city of 400 schools—it would be bad in a city of only 40 schools. The target must be that every school must make progress every year, and woe betide it if it does not. There must be sanctions; there must be a genuine investment of resources to enable the schools to achieve that progress.

It comes down to the question how one measures the distance travelled. I am happy to debate that issue in greater detail with Ministers on another occasion. We shall see what happens in the city of Birmingham in the next 18 months.

Professor Wragg, who is involved in teacher training, will return with his commission to measure what has happened in Birmingham since he wrote and published his report last year. He has put the city, the new education committee, the new leader of the council and the new chief education officer on trial. He presented his report and said that he would return to check on it in two years time. His checks will involve looking at what has happened in schools and how they have gone about raising the performance of not only pupils, but teachers—the two go hand in hand. We can never have a good schools programme if everything is driven from the centre by the Department for Education. That was probably where our difficulties began.

Mr. Butler: I hope to make a helpful intervention by taking the hon. Gentleman back to the issue of each school improving magnificently each year. That is fine, and I agree that we need to know, assess and improve the value-added element on each pupil every year. In the real world post-school, that pupil will have to be measured against other pupils who have emerged into the world. Ultimately, he must be measured against absolutes of achievement—what the hon. Gentleman describes as the output quota.

Mr. Rooker: At the end of school life—not educational life, as no one should ever opt out of education—on the other side of the barrier that we have assembled, when we cross from secondary to further or to higher education, there will be points of measurement. But yardsticks exist—whether in the form of GCSEs, A-levels, results from the Business and Technician Education Council or the record of achievement—against which all pupils are measured on a "level playing field", a phrase that I hate to use. Our task is to bring pupils to that level.

We stand a better chance of bringing all pupils nearer to the yardstick tests if we insist that every pupil is measured in terms of the distance they travel educationally, and demand that every school should improve every year. That would be better than the current wide system, under which we operate the carrot-and-stick approach, and nothing is measured at school. Such a system would be welcome, although not perfect. It would provide a better test for pupils than exists under the present arrangements.

The last thing we want is teacher training to be organised and controlled by schools. Hon. Members have mentioned vested interests. Progress in any walk of life can be obtained only by challenging vested interests. We all have vested interests, no matter what sector we work in. People do not like change. Therefore, we must be aware of vested interests, which sometimes stare us in the face and we still fail to recognise them. Good, sweet arguments are made as to why no change is necessary, everything is fine and people can manage as they are. I do not accept that argument, whether it be made in terms of housing, industry or education—

Mr. Pawsey: Trade unions?

Mr. Rooker: I do not accept that argument in relation to trade unions. Massive progress has been made in trade unions in recent years, because members have challenged vested interests in them.

Mr. Pawsey: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rooker: I should not give way, because the hon. Gentleman intervened from a sedentary position, but I shall do so as he is such a decent, one-nation Tory who supports the Secretary of State.

Mr. Pawsey: I shall accept that, and any terms from the hon. Gentleman, because I can return the compliment. His integrity in the House is beyond all doubt. If he believes that the reform of the trade unions challenges vested

interests, why did he not support the legislation introduced by my right hon. and hon. Friends challenging the vested interests of those unions?

Mr. Rooker: I am not going to be diverted, and I shall not be challenged on my ability to face up to vested interests in the House in any way, shape or form.

Vested interests must be challenged. The Department for Education has a vested interest in education. Local authorities have a vested interest. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) has made clear on other occasions, nothing in those organisations commands the confidence and trust of those working in education or those interested in the subject.

We should check on the performance of the schools of education in our higher education institutions. For one moment earlier today, I thought that I was back in the mid-1970s, when I sat on the other side of the Chamber and listened to the then Shirley Williams talk about teacher training colleges. I do not know what a teacher training college is. Such colleges disappeared decades ago and do not exist in the form that hon. Members have described them.

When discussing education, it is dangerous for any hon. Member or policy former to use his own experience as a pupil or a teacher, in higher or further education, 20 or 30 years ago, to form policy today. I cannot impress firmly enough on hon. Members the danger of doing that. It causes major problems because things have changed so much. It is highly dangerous, and damages the system, if we make quick visits to institutions or schools and then say that they are not as good as they were, so we must devise a new policy.

We must be able to measure performance. There is a case for better performance checks in schools of education in the higher education institutions. By and large, Ministers have spent a good deal of their time denigrating teachers and educationists in the past few years. I know that there has been a slight amelioration of that today, but over a period more time has been spent denigrating educationists than applauding them. They are not the people to do it through the quango, because it will not command confidence. If there is scope for a standing commission or something for the advancement of education, it is certainly not the Department for Education.

My hon. Friends realise that all is not well in education as it is structured at present. It is not right that education is as highly centralised and in the grasp of Ministers as it is at present. I know that my hon. Friends on the Front Bench do not want the powers that the Secretary of State has taken unto himself recently, because it is not the way in which education should be run.

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): The hon. Gentleman said that he does not believe in control from a distance. I suggest that, in a large number of schools, parents and governors are realising that the best way of running them is to do it themselves. That is why grant-maintained status has been so successful. The real problem is control by local education authorities, especially those run by the hon. Gentleman's party.

Mr. Rooker: I will not go down that road, because the idea that local education authorities are controlling schools is a fallacy. Schools control at least 85 per cent. of their own financial resources. I am aware of the inability of local education authorities to act in some areas. I wish that LEAs could act in some areas, but they say that they cannot do so because they do not have any control—it is down to the governors. Sometimes, governors are not fully seized of the responsibility that the House has thrust on them. A major change has taken place out there.

I speak as a member of a further education corporation—I have been so for more than 20 years. I am aware of the extra responsibilities that incorporation has placed on it. However, in terms of schools, governors are only just becoming aware of the great responsibility that they have for what happens in their schools. In some areas, that is making it difficult to find replacement governors; people realise that they cannot give the time and effort to their duties and responsibilities. It is not all plain sailing and sweetness and light, as the hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) imagines.

If we are to take education seriously—I do not think that the Bill does—we must stop messing about with it. For example, if there is a superficially attractive case for hypothecated taxes for the national health service, there is an overwhelming case for a special tax for education, whether it be through income tax, value added tax or education bonds. The fact is that we must examine different ways of funding education, because education covers the whole gamut, whether it is teacher training, running schools or training teachers in higher education institutions.

We need all the levers possible to ensure value for money. However, we should spend and raise what is required to do the job, because as a nation we cannot afford not to. That means to say yes. As a nation, we must assess what is needed to do the job in education, whether it be pre-school education, school education, further education or higher education. We must then make the resources available to do the job. That does not mean that we are not interested in value for money—I am as interested in that as any other hon. Member.

I do not think that we as a generation have a right to restrict the educational advancement of a younger generation, but that is what we do by not making resources available. We have a moral duty to push that generation to work and study harder with the resources required to make it available. That includes teachers, trainee teachers and pupils of every age.

I shall finish by referring briefly to a point made earlier. —indeed, the Secretary of State made the point in an intervention—about adults turning from industry to teaching, which they had never done. I applaud that. It is not easy for people to make that transition. People enter the higher education system to train as teachers. While I do not want to go down the road in detail, I do not think that we fund higher education properly. It is extremely difficult for people to move over. People may move over, having reassessed their lives. It may not be a conscious decision to leave the boardroom or the shop floor one day and to enter education. It does not happen like that. People have a period of reflection which usually comes about when they have moved from one job to another or when they have lost a job.

People ask themselves whether they are doing the right thing. What do they want to do with the rest of their lives? What opportunities are available for them to make a contribution? How best can they use their previous experience to benefit themselves, their families and their communities? Such questions cause people to consider offering their experience to the world of education.

[Mr. Rooker]

It is extremely difficult for people who have become unemployed and who are highly motivated to enter the world of education, simply because the way in which higher education is structured means that there are unfair distinctions between full-time and part-time. That distinction should be abolished. It would enable us to have a decent funding system, and it would enable more people to train to become teachers on a part-time or modular basis, rather than having to go the whole hog into a full-time position. Probably for the first time in their lives, they are applying for a mandatory grant, and they then find that they may lose free school meals for their children, housing benefits and all the other things that would keep them going while they are undertaking teacher training.

Our present system does not allow for lifelong learning involvement or continuity in education. Recently, there has been a phenomenal expansion, which cannot be denied. I only wish that more people knew about it, because they would then ask serious, intelligent questions about funding, instead of resorting to one-liners about restoring grants or abolishing loans, which means either billions of pounds of public expenditure or a massive cut in existing student numbers. That is the consequence of such one-liners.

Students should be decently funded. If Madam Speaker had selected my reasoned amendment—I make no criticism about that; in some ways, I would have been horrified if she had selected it—we could have raised some of the issues that I raised in it.

Some of today's students, some of whom are training to be teachers, are queuing up for their refectory meals or collecting one meal and three plates to divide it by three because there is not enough money to go round. In some colleges, lecturers are sharing their lunch boxes with students, because the students do not have enough money to buy food to eat during the week.

By and large, they are not the ones who may be getting the full grant and taking out the full loan; it is those who may not be getting the extra contributions that they should get from their parents, or it is the part-timers who are not being properly funded and assisted by the system. There is no problem with students putting something back into the kitty when they are doing well later, but it is certainly not possible under the present unfair system.

It is sad that we have not got it right. We know that Ministers will claim that we have the best-funded student support system anywhere in Europe.

Mr. Patten: Correct.

Mr. Rooker: I am not denying that, when one looks at the global figure. But if it is so good, why do we have abject student poverty in pockets in every college and university in the country? At the same time, we are making money available, frankly, to those who do not need it. I pointed that out in my reasoned amendment, and I do not wish to go into that in further detail.

Generally, education and social policies are synonymous with social justice. I do not think that we have social justice in education in Britain, either for trainee teachers or for anyone else, and the Bill will not bring it about. If the Secretary of State had come forward with a programme based on a good schools programme with equity funding, he would have found a great deal of support across the House. He would probably have been astonished by the areas in which he found support. I am sad that he has not taken the opportunity to do that. I am gratified that he accepted the compromise reached in the House of Lords on part II.

I was the first to respond to the Secretary of State's original statement on 1 July last year. He told me that I put the "R" back into "rant" when I pointed out that his programme and proposals for student unions would not work. If it was worth a rant, it worked, and for that I am grateful.

7.49 pm

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): May I at once declare an interest as an adviser to the Association of Teachers and Lecturers?

I reassure the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) that to the best of my knowledge none of my right hon. or hon. Friends has ever attacked or denigrated teachers. They have gone out of their way on numerous occasions, all of which are on the record in *Hansard*, to applaud teachers and to thank them for their excellent work with the nation's children. Unlike the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), I served on the Committee examining the education Bill to which she referred and I well recall the tone and language of Opposition Members in opposing some of our measures, which included the national curriculum and OFSTED.

Mr. Win Griffiths: We supported the principle of the national curriculum and the principle of local management of schools, which many Labour authorities pioneered. We wanted a better inspection system and we said that the way in which the Government introduced those measures was wrong and that they were ahead of the pilot schemes. The whole of the Dearing review shows how much we were right and how much the Secretary of State was wrong.

Mr. Pawsey: The hon. Gentleman confirms that what I said was right. He says that the Government were wrong. The hon. Gentleman and his colleagues opposed the Bill in Committee.

The hon. Member for Dewsbury failed to answer the question about the cost of nursery schools. I appreciate that I may be intruding on private grief but it would be helpful if the hon. Lady could bring herself to say that it will cost £500 million or £800 million or whatever the figure is. She must have some idea, and if she wishes to intervene I shall willingly give way.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I can tell the hon. Gentleman how much nursery education will cost if he can tell me how much progress Tory councils will make. How is it that Labour councils can manage to afford nursery places for 40 per cent. of their three and four-year-olds while Tory councils manage to find places for only 13 per cent.? If the Government made that a priority, they could find resources. I wrote to the Secretary of State some time ago about surplus places, requesting that before any such places were identified and taken out of the system the scope for developing nursery education in those areas should be examined. The Secretary of State has not even had the courtesy to reply.

Mr. Pawsey: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is able to say that in his view the cost of introducing universal nursery education would be about £800 million. If he can put a figure on it, why cannot the hon. Lady?

Mrs. Taylor: It is because the Secretary of State has made many assumptions. I could assume that local authorities have sufficient money to fund nursery places at the Labour average rate. I cannot understand why Tory councils fail to make the provision that Labour councils are making.

Mr. Pawsey: I understand the hon. Lady's clear reluctance to put a figure on it. I suspect that she has been hauled over the coals by her hon. Friends, who have successfully gagged her. Perhaps I could draw her on another matter. The hon. Lady opposes grant-maintained schools, grammar schools, the independent sector and city technology colleges. Do Her Majesty's principal Opposition have any discernible policy in education?

Mrs. Taylor: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will eventually get to the Bill. Before he does, perhaps I may recommend Labour's Green Paper on education, "Opening Doors to a Learning Society," and suggest that our objective that the education of everyone really matters must be the way forward. I remind the hon. Gentleman that before Christmas the Prime Minister said that 15 per cent. of our children get an education that is as good as anywhere in the world. He went on to say that unfortunately the rest do not. Giving a decent education to 15 per cent. is inadequate. Britain has no future as a low-skill, low-wage economy, but that is the direction in which the Government are taking us. When more children passed examinations, as happened a couple of years ago with the GCSE, the Secretary of State complained that too many were passing —what an indictment that is.

Mr. Pawsey: We have still not had a detailed exposition of what the Opposition would do if they came to office. My concern is shared by *The Independent*, which stated:

"Mrs. Taylor has offered two bundles of rehashed reflection liberally laced with out of date waffle. Her papers are so palely green they are virtually translucent. Mrs. Taylor should be fired."

I welcome the Bill and I welcome the Secretary of State's remark that this is the last piece in the education jigsaw. I share that view. A missing piece distorts and spoils the picture, but we can now visualise the scene when the jigsaw is complete.The Bill is the final step that is needed to transform education in British schools.

I shall confine my speech to one aspect of the Bill—part I on teacher training. My concentration on part I should not be taken as a sign that I am disenchanted or in disagreement with part II. It is simply that I wish to concentrate on teaching and schools. As my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) said, many hon. Members wish to speak about part II, which deals specifically with student unions.

The Government's stated intention is to raise the standards of education for every child, and that prize is well within our grasp. For a long time I have believed that our nation has an almost infinite capacity to denigrate our institutions and achievements. That point was recently made by my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary. We concentrate on the defects and seldom seem to lift our eyes to our general and genuine national achievements. The Government's education reforms, which started principally in 1988, are at last beginning to bear fruit. The national curriculum and testing are increasingly accepted as a means of improving the quality and standard of state education by which the majority of the nation's children are educated.

OFSTED is doing much to improve the nation's schools. So far, it has produced reports on more than 350 schools and, additionally, has undertaken more than 3,000 inspection visits. I was disappointed to hear the Secretary of State refer to what was taking place in East Anglia, where it appears that OFSTED is still being fought by the Liberals. I was dismayed because it shows that the Liberals have failed to grasp what OFSTED is about. The justification for OFSTED can be found in its substantial contribution, through those inspections, to raising standards. OFSTED is another of the Government's success stories. It is worth remembering that it was yet another reforming measure that was opposed by the short-sighted Opposition. On its introduction, it was derided by Labour and Liberal spokesmen. We were then told that it would be the end of education as we knew it.

OFSTED has a particular relevance to the Bill and it would be helpful if I quote Professor Sutherland:

"I was struck by the consistency with which inspections show how close, at all stages of education, is the statistical relationship between the standards and quality of learning, on the one hand, and the quality of teaching on the other".

Here, then, is the justification for the Bill, which in part I sets out the method by which teacher training will be improved.

The Bill will ensure that student teachers spend more time in schools learning from good practising teachers, and that teachers will be able to play a major part in designing the courses to be followed by the student.

The training for primary teachers will include more time on maths, English and science, with greater emphasis on the basic skills of reading and arithmetic. The Bill will set up a new Teacher Training Agency, and I am delighted to have the support of my hon. Friend for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson). Although I was not surprised, as I know of his interest in these matters, it is always good to hear him speaking in support. The Bill will set up a new Teacher Training Agency which will bring together the various training strands, to the benefit of school children generally.

Currently, the situation is complex because those involved with teacher training include the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, the Department for Education, and the teaching as a career unit. The Bill enables a new and independent body to be established, dedicated to teacher training. The importance of teacher training can scarcely be overstated. I was interested but not particularly surprised that, according to the Campaign for Real Education:

"Teacher training institutions are the engine rooms of progressive education."

I suspect that not many Conservative Members would disagree with that description, but the campaign is not alone in its view.

The point was particularly well underlined by the leading article in *The Sunday Times* on 10 April this year. It referred to the National Union of Teachers conference in Scarborough:

"A procession of militants trooped to the rostrum to proclaim the enduring validity of all the loony-left nostrums from the 1960s and 1970s that have done so much to condemn huge chunks of a generation to illiteracy and falling numeracy."

It continued:

[Mr. Pawsey]

"Their main concern was to oppose the regular testing of pupils and the compilation of league tables based on such tests".

It went on to refer to grant-maintained schools and said that they were bringing in higher standards

"by opting out of the often dead hand of local authority control".

That is one answer to the hon. Member for Perry Barr. So frequently the local education authority is a dead hand.

The leader went on—I am not in total agreement with all this:

"The barbarians are no longer at the gate; they are inside our classrooms."

The Bill will certainly help to reduce the number of barbarians and should make life easier for the ordinary teachers who form the strong and splendid backbone of the teacher force in the United Kingdom.

As I said earlier, the Bill completes the schools picture. It builds on what has gone before—the national curriculum and tests, local management of schools and grant-maintained schools. It consolidates OFSTED and emphasises the need for performance tables. Anyone who doubts that a success story in education is now emerging need only look for proof to advanced education, where student numbers have increased to well over 1 million.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): I was glad to hear the hon. Gentleman's last phrase and I thank him for giving way. Is he aware that, in terms of graduate applicants to teacher training courses this year as compared with last year, there has been a 40 per cent. drop in physics graduates, a 23 per cent. drop in mathematics graduates and also falls in the numbers of other graduates—a significant percentage in chemistry and a smaller percentage in biology? There is an enormous shortfall in applications from science graduates in comparison with last year. If the hon. Gentleman is so convinced that this is the last piece of the jigsaw, can he explain why, with all the other pieces in place, there is such a drop at the present time, and how he thinks that the Bill—which I consider irrelevant—will have anything to do with getting the numbers that we need to teach science effectively in our schools?

Mr. Pawsey: I recognise the sincerity with which the hon. Gentleman speaks. Perhaps he will agree with me that science graduates are not coming forward because of the greater employment opportunities that now exist. Unemployment is falling, thank God, and as it falls there is greater competition for the well-trained science graduates to whom the hon. Gentleman refers.

Mr. Gunnell: If the hon. Gentleman is saying that we can attract science graduates only when there is nothing else for them to do, is that not an indictment of the opportunities in teaching that we are offering if we cannot compete with the outside world?

Mr. Pawsey: Let me give the hon. Gentleman an alternative view. If I were a science graduate and I saw what was taking place at Scarborough when the NUT was at the rostrum with the remarkable procession of teachers repeatedly attacking their own profession and what it seeks to do, I wonder whether I would choose to join their ranks. That, I suspect, is the real and direct answer to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: As a science graduate, I am sure that my hon. Friend will be pleased for me to support his argument. If we take measures to improve the professional status of teachers, as the Bill is designed to do, it will surely attract science graduates into the teaching profession, so the point is irrelevant to the Bill.

Mr. Pawsey: My hon. Friend speaks with his usual knowledge and wisdom. When we came to office in 1979, only one in eight of the target group was in advanced education; the figure is now one in three. That confirms at least two things: first, the additional funding has been made available to advanced education; secondly, and perhaps more importantly, there is a growing number of young people sufficiently well educated in the nation's mainstream schools to take advantage of the new opportunities which now exist in our universities.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and his predecessors, but particularly my right hon. Friend, can take pride in the Government's achievements, which are often denigrated by Opposition Members for nothing more than cheap political advantage. The Bill will do much to ensure that students have a much better grasp of what takes place within the classroom, with less time being spent on theory and more on the practicalities of teaching and the imparting of knowledge.

Recently Peter Smith, the general secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, drew attention to the professionalism of teachers, and he was right to do so. I have said many times in the House over a considerable number of years that in my view the overwhelming majority of the nation's teachers are dedicated both to their profession and to the children in their charge. The Bill will ensure that those dedicated teachers will be able to impart their own hard-won skills and knowledge to newcomers.

I must emphasise that neither the Government nor the new Teacher Training Agency will force schools to accept additional responsibilities. It will be purely a voluntary step. I am grateful for the support of my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman).

Mr. Colin Pickthall (Lancashire, West): If the hon. Gentleman is so convinced that the measures proposed in the Bill will do exactly what he envisages, how does he reconcile that with the voluntary principle that he is now praising so highly?

Mr. Pawsey: I reconcile it in the same way as I reconcile the voluntary principle for grant-maintained schools. Both are equally good. I look forward to schools taking up the challenge posed by the Bill, as I am sure that they will, in just the same way as I look forward to more and more schools receiving grant-maintained status.

The Bill emphasises the importance of the teacher and the school. The Government have already acknowledged those two factors by substantially increasing average teachers' pay by some 46 per cent. in real terms, since 1979. The Government have acknowledged the importance of the school by increasing spending per pupil by some 47 per cent., again in real terms since 1979. The Government have made the funds available, but the extra funding has not been reflected in an equivalent increase in standards —hence the Bill and the emphasis that it places on the good training of teachers. I stress that the Government have not hesitated to make money available for education. Significantly, overall spending on education has risen by 50 per cent. since 1979.

Mr. Dunn: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pawsey: I am obliged to my hon. Friend for his support. He is a man well known for his expertise in education.

Earlier, I referred to the new Teacher Training Agency and I found clause 13 to be of particular significance. Clearly, it will not be an unlucky number. It will give the new agency a statutory role in the accreditation of institutions. A new agency will ensure that those providing teacher training will be able to deliver quality courses, and all courses will be subject to inspection by OFSTED. Needless to say, the new agency will be able to withdraw accreditation if an institution fails to produce a course of sufficient quality.

Mr. Hawkins: Does my hon. Friend agree that that is precisely the importance of the measure in the eyes of parents and governors? My hon. Friend will be aware that having campaigned for about 15 years for the reform of teacher training, long before I came to the House, I particularly welcome this part of the Bill. It is essential that parents and governors be given the confidence that teachers will be trained properly and that failing institutions will be disqualified from training teachers.

Mr. Pawsey: My hon. Friend makes a formidable point and he is right to do so.

It is worth while restating the fact that higher education will continue to provide teacher training and that teacher training will remain part of higher education, but the schools will rightly have a much greater part to play. One of the things that I find genuinely surprising is that in the past the very schools where teachers work have not been properly involved in the training of teachers. Clause 4 ensures that initial training will continue and enables funds to be made available to support in-service training. The agency will be able to fund existing schemes for licensed and overseas-trained teachers.

Earlier, I referred to the NUT. The House will be interested in a recent article in *The Daily Telegraph* which said:

"The NUT claims to oppose the national curriculum tests be cause they are 'educationally flawed'. This is rich coming from a union whose madly anti-learning philosophy has softened the brains of a generation. One 'flaw'"—

according to the NUT—

"is that the tests focus on real skills and real knowledge—in the case of English, for example, on comprehension, spelling and grammar . . . They see literacy as a tool of oppression and prefer to focus (in the words of Labour spokeswoman Ann Taylor) 'on how relationships develop in a school'."

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Dewsbury is not in her place, but I remind her of a piece written by David Woodhead, the Independent Schools Information Service's national director, which, interestingly, was headed, "Taylor-made to depress." It said:

"Mrs. Taylor gives an impression of impatience with the concept of parental choice. The consequence of this for the state and independent sectors if she became Education Secretary would be serious."

I put it to my hon. Friends that that is an understatement.

I come now to a point made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State during the course of his remarks—

Mr. Dunn: I apologise for not being here to listen to all my hon. Friend's speech, but given his knowledge of both Conservative and Opposition education policy, does he think that the Opposition parties have learnt anything about education in the 15 years that we have been in the House? Or are they still committed to neighbourhood comprehensive schools, social engineering, NUT policies and all the things that we came into Government to stop?

Mr. Pawsey: Sadly, I have naught for my hon. Friend's reassurance. As I understand the Labour party's policy, inasmuch as it has one, it seems to have learnt nothing. *[Interruption.]* Yes, as my hon. Friend says from a sedentary position, it would continue with its policy of abolishing the grammar schools.

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): Bourbons.

Mr. Pawsey: My hon. Friend refers to Opposition Members as Bourbons, and he is right. *[Interruption.]* No, not the biscuits—the other kind.

I want teachers to reoccupy the place that they formerly held in a society in which they were once regarded in similar fashion to doctors. During the past 20 years, the profession has suffered a dramatic loss of public esteem. The teacher unions, especially the NUT, must accept their fair share of responsibility for the way in which the classroom teacher is now all too often regarded.

Mr. Hawkins: Does my hon. Friend agree that the main difficulty has been that many of the unions, and the NUT in particular in this area, have pretended to be industrial, smokestack industry unions, which in itself has been damaging to the reputation of good teachers? The militant unions, especially the NUT, have dragged down the image of teachers. They have done the biggest disservice to education. Only when teachers stop playing at being militant trade unionists will they recover their respect.

Mr. Pawsey: My hon. Friend's point is a further answer to the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell).

The Bill improves teacher training, which in turn enhances the stature of the individual teacher. It will increase the esteem in which teachers are held. It helps to restore a true professionalism to what at times has been a desperately beleaguered group. I commend the Bill to the House.

8.17 pm

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): I apologise for being absent for part of the debate, and I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for nevertheless giving me the opportunity to speak.

I declare an interest. I am an adviser to the NUT and to UCAC, the National Union of Teachers of Wales—"national" meaning something different in both those titles.

In discussing part I, I want to open on a positive note. During the past week I have spoken at some length to various people interested or involved in the kind of pilot partnership training schemes that have flowed from circular 9/92 and, in Wales, circular 35/92. I talked with two union officials, a headmaster, more than one member of staff at a university education department and the head of English at a comprehensive school. I emphasise that they all spoke positively about the principle of partnership and school-based training. I was most impressed by the enthusiasm that they showed for the active involvement of practising teachers in the training process. It is recognised that that is an entirely new approach and that something fresh is happening—that schools and teachers are sharing the training process so that it is not left entirely to

[Mr. Cynog Dafis]

university staff, with schools simply providing them with facilities. Something new, valid and important is happening.

There is recognition also of the enormous gain for students in being closely involved in the life of a teaching department and of a school. In the model that I examined, that involvement lasts 24 and one half weeks out of the total of 36 weeks for the school year. The teacher to whom I spoke told me of the satisfaction and stimulus that she derives from that involvement with students, who become part of an academic as well as a training process.

The same teacher told me also that she is beginning to feel exploited. She spoke of the extra burden of work imposed, which meant that she and her colleagues must seriously reconsider whether to continue the partnership, and she said in effect that that would be conditional on her and her colleagues being given extra time as teachers or extra money.

The burden is considerable. The responsibilities of that teacher, who is a general mentor, are defined so as to ensure that the students' school experience is broad, coherent and relevant; lead the team of subject mentors and co-ordinate work across subject areas to achieve that; introduce students to the school; assign students to shadow form teachers, to gain classroom experience; arrange for students to pay weekly visits to feeder primary schools; liaise with tutors from the department; meet students weekly for a training session focusing on different areas of competence; provide support, professional guidance and counselling to students; and assess and discuss progress and help to set goals. There is more to it than that. I could read a similar list of responsibilities in respect of subject mentors.

The House does not need to be reminded that teachers are already overworked. That is having a significant negative effect on their morale, imposes strain and in some cases breakdowns, and causes people to leave the profession. That is the result of an overburdened national curriculum, the process of continuous assessment, recording achievement and so on—and constant changes in school curriculums.

For that burden of extra work, that general mentor is allowed two additional free lessons, as we used to call them —two additional protected times. No wonder she spent most of her May day holiday at school, in preparation—as she does for much of her so-called holidays. Being a rather hard-boiled old nut who spent some years in the teaching profession, I find it astonishing that teachers are willing to participate in all that. If somebody had asked me four years ago to undertake that work in addition to my existing responsibilities as a head of English, I would have shown them the door. I might have felt guilty, and perhaps I would have telephoned the university education department to say that I would, after all, participate.

It is a tribute to the commitment and professionalism of teachers that they are prepared, as are so many schools, to take on that extra burden and to extol the virtues of the new system to me—but at the same time they say that they are seriously overburdened. Theirs is a labour of love, no less.

One senior member of the university department to whom I spoke explained that the partnership system is surviving because of the tremendous reserve of good will in terms of the dedication of teachers and their desire to be part of the process of helping a new generation of educators. That is why the system works for now. But the same person told me that the system would not be sustainable in the long term. That bold statement perfectly mirrors the comments of the school teacher—that staff will not continue unless additional resources are provided for extra time.

Accordingly, the university concerned agreed to increase the sum delegated to schools from £600 per student to £900 for the next year. At the same time, the transitional funding provided for the university education department is coming to an end, with the loss of £120,000 per year. As a result, the department is running the teacher-training course in deficit—it is not paying its way. It is subsidised by other aspects of the department's work, such as degrees and postgraduate work. Teacher training constitutes one third of the full-time equivalents in that particular education department.

It may be thought that, if more work and funding are delegated to schools, less work will have to be done by universities, so that there will be a transfer of responsibilities, functions and funds. It does not work like that. The new model of teacher training, which has much merit, is a much more intensive process than used to be the case. It requires extra input from the school and university —not from one rather than the other, but from both. That corresponds with the teacher's comments.

Mr. Gunnell: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the financial deficit that he described is common to a large number of higher education institutions because their transitional funding has decreased while they have to pay money to schools? Does he agree also that, because schools are not coming forward in sufficient numbers, an inherently and fundamentally unstable situation is being created that will cause the initiative's eventual demise?

Mr. Dafis: I was making exactly that point, but would prefer not to have to make it. The policy is unsustainable. The Government should have learned some lessons about unsustainable initiatives from the national curriculum. The same will be true of the new system.

The teacher to whom I spoke confirmed the need for the university to maintain at least its current level of activity, rather than reduce it. She wanted more input from the university, not less. She referred me to the value of the theoretical and academic expertise that the university can provide—the theoretical backing to her work at a practical level in the school. That contradicts the dismissive and philistine comments of Conservative Members about trendy theorists and eggheads.

Everything indicates that the initiative is underfunded and under-resourced. Leaving that aside for the moment, given proper resourcing, and if mentors were provided with substantial extra time to perform the extra work, we would have a useful model for teacher education. It has a sensible division of responsibilities between school and higher education institutions, and it is being created as a result of the combined expertise and enthusiasm of school and university staff in partnership. The word to emphasise is "partnership". The model has the particular advantage of creating a close, interactive relationship between academics, who are important people, and practising teachers, bringing developments in theory and innovative ideas to schools from the universities and feeding back the

day-to-day realities of teaching and learning to the universities. That, in turn, would have a significant potential effect on the quality and direction of research.

Our concern should be how to make that fundamentally, good model sustainable in the long term; it is manifestly not so at present. It is currently, and will continue to be, increasingly difficult to get schools to participate. That should occupy our attention, as it does the schools and university in Dyfed. They are looking carefully at the quality of the work that is being done and are conducting seminars and conferences in doing so. Instead, the Government have what I can describe only as a hare-brained scheme to make schools into lead institutions.

As I understand it, higher education institutions would be nothing more than contractors offering services to schools—in the market, of course—and have no more security or ability to plan for the future, no more ability to think long term in terms of innovation, research programmes and so on, than the market alone ever affords. This is part of a syndrome that people everywhere are worried about in relation to institutions of higher education and research generally.

It is clear to me that the hidden agenda is to water down the intellectual, theoretical and educational content of teacher training. It is no accident that words such as theoretical and intellectual are being rubbished tonight. That is a disturbing tendency, and that kind of language and vocabulary is far too familiar from right-wing Governments and political movements. In effect, we are seeing a move towards the return of the pupil-teacher. My mother was an uncertificated pupil-teacher. I am sure that she was excellent, and if she were alive today she would be doing a degree, following a proper course in teacher training, and would be a far better teacher than she was in those days.

All of this is utterly unacceptable in Wales. Surveys conducted in Gwynedd and Dyfed—in Gwynedd by Bangor normal college—have shown overwhelming opposition to the idea of school-led training among headmasters and headmistresses of schools. The enormous contribution of higher education institutions and the development of educational practice in Wales is well recognised. I could speak at length on my experience of the value of a theoretical approach, for example, to linguistics as backing for the way in which language is taught in schools, and the linkage of teaching language and using language to teach and learn. A whole area has sprung from a theoretical base in the work of people such as Douglas Barnes and shows perfectly how valuable and practically important a good, theoretical basis is for pedagogy, for proper teaching.

In Wales, we wish to see continuation of the integration of academic and theoretical study, research and training for the practice of teaching. Let us have no misunderstanding that we wish to see accreditation remain a function of higher education institutions. We wish to see partnership develop and grow. I trust that the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales will hear that message loud and clear. I hope that it will not see it as part of its business. One needs to understand that, praise the Lord, we will not have an independent and separate funding council in Wales. The Higher Education Funding Council will take charge, and I trust that it will not see the promotion of the idea of schools as the lead institutions for training as part of its functions, although the Government intend to give it that power.

I hope that the writ of the Teacher Training Agency will not run in Wales. I ask for confirmation of that, and refer to clause 17, which says that the Secretary of State will be able to

"provide for the transfer to the Teacher Training Agency of the property, rights and liabilities . . . of the Teaching as a Career Unit."

What will happen to the Wales office of the teaching career unit? It has done good work and I hope that it will not come under the aegis of the TTA, which we very much wish to see as an English institution. I would like to see the Bill amended to make it quite clear that it will not—*[Interruption.]* I can only offer my deepest sympathy to all those who will have to suffer the effects of the existence of such a body.

Clause 16(2) provides:

"The Secretary of State may by order confer or impose on the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales such functions supplementary to their functions as a funding agency as he thinks fit."

All I want to know is which Secretary of State that is. Is it the Secretary of State for Education or the Secretary of State for Wales? It should be the latter, and I trust that even the existing Secretary of State for Wales will not wish to impose functions that are foreign to what we want to see in Wales.

We are fortunate in Wales that the reality of Welsh nationhood and distinctness offers us some protection from the worst potential effects of the Bill. I welcome the intention, stated in the consultation document last September, to introduce different arrangements for certain aspects of teacher training in Wales. In Wales, what we need is not the inadequate protection of administrative devolution. Although that offers a degree of protection, as is the case here, we need more than that. We need the power through the democratic process in Wales to take our own initiatives, to carry through our own reforms, based on the principles that are dear to us of co-operation and partnership, and the sensible idea of pragmatism at the same time. I hope that it will not be too long before we can start that process.

8.37 pm

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): The debate has been extremely enlightening, because it seems that we have heard from the Opposition an endless stream of destructive dogma. I wonder whether they are seeking to skate over endless reasons why there cannot be a teachers training agency. When I look, for instance, at my notes of the remarks made by the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) I see that she said that the Bill is not constructive or purposeful; that it is a waste of time; that it is a tatty Bill. Can those really be the remarks of a serious spokesperson on education who genuinely cares about the children in our schools? Perhaps she is trying to cover up the serious flaws of the Labour party and its record on education. For instance, I remind her that the worst 10 A-level results in 1993 were returned largely by Labour-controlled local education authorities. The only exception was Tower Hamlets. I remind her that the most damning indictment of Labour's local education policies is, perhaps, the high percentage of children in Labour areas who leave school with no examination passes at all.

Mr. Enright: Would the hon. Lady care to cite the figures for the correlation between poverty and backwardness, while she is at it?

Lady Olga Maitland: I am talking about education standards in schools. Let me list the worst 10: Rochdale, Lambeth, Manchester, Islington, Liverpool, Haringey, Tower Hamlets—again—Salford, Birmingham and Southwark.

Mr. Gunnell: The hon. Lady is clearly concerned about standards in schools; she clearly believes that the Bill will help. Why is it better to impose a great deal of student teaching, rather than professional teaching, on schools? The Bill proposes to increase the number of classes taught by people who are learning the job. Can you explain how that will help children?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that I am not answering the questions.

Lady Olga Maitland: I will deal with the hon. Gentleman's remarks in due course. Let me say straight away that the whole purpose of enabling teachers to learn the job in schools is to allow them to learn from the experienced teachers who are already there, and to gain expertise in the task first hand.

We have heard many disparaging remarks about my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I can only say that I regard his tenure as an enormous success: he has produced many considerable achievements, and the Bill is another step along the road. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Do any of the hon. Members who are interrupting hope to catch my eye?

Lady Olga Maitland: The Bill may well be scorned by Opposition Members, but it will be enormously welcome to parents who want their children to benefit from the very best teacher training that is available.

Mr. Pickthall: If the hon. Lady is so sure that the majority of parents will welcome the Bill, will she tell us why the Department has published no evidence of parents' opinions?

Lady Olga Maitland: We are still trying to collate evidence from the pilot schemes, but the evidence that we have obtained so far is extremely encouraging; otherwise, we would not have acted as we have.

I welcome the Bill, because it fulfils a real need. Some 12 years ago, I launched my pro-NATO organisation Families for Defence. It was not directly related to education—save for the fact that I received evidence from school children about the pressures of heavy political indoctrination and bias imposed on them by teachers who had just left teacher training colleges. They were clearly interested not in education, but in manipulating young children. A paper to which I contributed—"Peace Studies in our Schools—Propaganda for Defencelessness", written by Dr. John Marks—revealed the depth of this serious problem.

I found it particularly sad that the teachers who were undermining our young people were also undermining the dedicated work of good teachers who found it difficult to stand their ground. I pay tribute to the majority of teachers—dedicated-minded people who care only for the children. They care not a jot how many hours they must work; they do not watch the clock; they serve only to provide for future generations. They, however, have been undermined by weak, out-of-date, misguided teachers who have come up through the system and are a long way from what I would describe as traditional standards in teaching—what we would associate with "Mr. Chalky".

We must beware of the political mischief that can go on. We should look at the source from which teachers come, and ensure that we provide them with the training which has breadth, diversity and flexibility that will give them a chance to develop their talents unhindered by the dogma that has imbued teacher training colleges up and down the country. The time has come for us to focus on children's needs, and their right to learn unfettered by other issues. The teacher—the person in whom a child puts his faith and trust—will be the vehicle for that child's future, and it is therefore important to look seriously at how teachers are trained.

There should be rigour in the classroom; we should concentrate on the national curriculum. I am delighted that even Labour now admits that the core curriculum has enormously benefited young children, having opposed it bitterly in the past.

The fact is that all professions work within accepted boundaries, whether the profession involved happens to be medicine, law or, indeed, teaching. In setting out the boundaries for education, we should be quite clear about what we expect from our teachers. We expect rigour, and concentration on the basic skills that children need for the future—the ability to read smoothly and fluently at the right age, comprehending what they are reading; the ability to write correctly and fluently; the ability to spell; and the ability to punctuate their written work correctly. Unless teachers focus on those important skills, they will have under-served their pupils when they go out into the world of work.

During last year's rows about teacher tests, I was saddened by my encounters with a number of English teachers who said that they did not approve of such tests. Spelling tests, they said, destroyed a child's love of literature. What nonsense! It is time for teachers to set standards, and I believe that they will do so much more readily and easily if they can develop their skills unfettered by what I would describe as the political masters in teacher training colleges.

Mr. Edward O'Hara (Knowsley, South): Can the hon. Lady identify one of the teacher training colleges where all these awful things are happening? Let me offer a simpler challenge: can she identify a teacher training college?

Lady Olga Maitland: I shall give examples a little later.

We must look seriously at the crazy world of teacher training. Far too much time has been devoted to education theory; we must examine what is actually happening. Teachers coming out of training colleges tend to focus on racism, sexism and gender politics. What has that to do with children learning? The HMI report published on 7 December 1993 was scathing about the standard of teaching, revealing that in urban schools 40 per cent. of lessons were judged unsatisfactory and that, in some schools, two thirds were found to be poor or unsatisfactory. We cannot be complacent about that. The inspectors were highly critical of the low expectations that teachers had of children; overall, nearly 30 per cent. of lessons in primary schools were found to be unsatisfactory.

Mr. Jamieson: There is a slight inconsistency in the hon. Lady's argument. She says that teachers are inadequate, yet the Bill hands over instruction of new teachers to those very people.

Lady Olga Maitland: The schools in which teachers will train will not be the inadequate ones. We should, however, bear in mind that some teachers are performing poorly, and look at how they came to be trained. We should note, for instance, that

"In the worst schools the inspectors criticised . . . the inadequate knowledge the teachers of older primary children had of their subject areas; the unacceptably low standard of work; the fact that many children were engaged in mundane tasks such as copying and colouring; the poor punctuality, persistent bad behaviour of pupils, unfinished homework, and the slow pace of lessons".

We have so much to work on.

Mr. O'Hara: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving way. As the hon. Lady is referring to the HMI report, is she also aware that in paragraphs 110 to 112 of that report the inspectors are extremely complimentary about the quality of preparation of teachers in the departments? About 90 per cent. of courses are at least satisfactory. In the same paragraphs, they are critical of the support which is offered to these teachers from the schools during initial training and during induction. Yet the hon. Lady is proposing that the training responsibility be taken from the colleges and given to the schools. Where is the consistency in that?

Lady Olga Maitland: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his remarks, but I will continue. He asked me earlier to give some examples of poor teacher training. I refer him to the South Bank university—or, as it used to be known, the South Bank polytechnic. The HMI inspectors, commenting on the university's two-year degree for mature students from ethnic minority backgrounds, said:

"The quality of the students' writing is a cause for concern. Apart from the work of a few fluent writers, assignments display persistent formal problems—particularly with articles, suffixes, paragraphs and spelling . . . One student has such chronic difficulty with tense and number that she would make a poor model for pupils."

That is simply looking at the way that students are performing, without taking into account the fact that in many other colleges, which I could draw to the attention of hon. Members, political dogma gets in the way of real learning.

At the University of Brighton—or Brighton polytechnic, as it was known—on the first day of a course a student teacher was told that competition in sport was elitist and that the words "first", "second" and "third" should not be used to rank children. The students were told to use words such as "beetroot" and "turnip" instead.

The student pointed out that he had marks deducted for using the word "his" when talking about an imaginary teacher in a presentation. The student was also told that using a word such as "caveman" instead of "cave person" would result in failure in the final examination. Finally —this is perhaps the most worrying point—the student was told that spelling and grammar were of secondary importance. These are the many reasons why we have to concentrate on building the base of teacher training.

The Institute of Education in London does not encourage rote learning of mathematics tables, for instance. It prefers children to learn through games. A course at the College of Education in Scotland was explained by a student who said:

"The course . . . had turned out to be largely Left-wing sociology overlaid with Politically Correct discipline."

These kinds of attitude are not helpful in preparing children for life.

Ms Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): Does it not occur to the hon. Lady that the Institute of Education may be right and that children can learn spelling and tables very well through games—in fact, it may be a better way of learning than boring them to tears with learning by rote?

Lady Olga Maitland: Over and over again, it has been found that learning by rote is an essential discipline for children through their school careers. There is no soft option in learning; it is very unfair to lead children to believe that they can somehow skate through their school careers without any pain. There is always pain; schooling is a preparation for later life.

The way in which some colleges have become obsessed with their own ideologies is extremely worrying. I draw the attention of the House to Nene college in Northampton. Hon. Members may recall that in 1990 it twice rejected a Cambridge classics graduate for a teacher training course. When Mrs. Annis Garfield reapplied posing as a left-wing, Afro-Caribbean, animal rights activist and filled out her form with appalling spelling errors she was immediately invited for an interview. It is hardly surprising that we have to persist in this endeavour. I am also concerned that the correct rigour be applied to the education of young children.

The curriculums in colleges are loaded with political ideology. They seek to demean religious education, for instance. They seek to undermine the teaching of Christianity, which is part of the ethos of our society. This society is a Christian society, no matter what multi-cultural mish-mash teachers choose to make of it.

Last week, as a member of the Education Select Committee—the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) accompanied me on this occasion—I went to Bristol to look at inner-city education. The hon. Gentleman and I may well have different views about what we saw on our visit to some schools in deprived areas. I found it very worrying that, by and large, the male teachers were unfit to be what I call perfect role models, in the sense that they were scruffy and full of sociological jargon.

At one school, only three out of seven male staff members wore shirts and ties; the rest wore jumpers. I do not feel that it is at all helpful for young people, who perhaps come from very broken and disturbed homes, to find that the one male figure in their lives whom they trust is hardly a fit person to look up to as a role model. At a primary school in Tower Hamlets a teacher had a pony tail as well as a woolly sweater. We are trying to give teachers a certain status so that they may be respected. How can they be respected if they undermine the very professionalism which the majority of their colleagues exhibit?

I think that the whole purpose of teacher training colleges and the Teacher Training Agency should be to look at the methods by which children are taught. We examined examples of mixed ability teaching and that, combined with mixed topic teaching, to my mind was an absolute disaster.

Mr. Dafis: Is the hon. Lady suggesting that the Teacher Training Agency would prohibit young men with pony tails from teaching?

Lady Olga Maitland: I would hope that, when people applied for teacher training, we would select only the most dedicated and those who meet the required standard.

We are considering the opportunity for teachers to train on the spot, in schools where there are already the highest standards and where there is no mixed ability teaching which seems merely to confuse children and benefits neither the weaker nor the brighter child. We are also considering how we can enable new teachers to develop in what I call the halls, or schools, of excellence, where they can be taught and guided by a peer group which has years of training behind it, schools which already have the best possible results and which will therefore provide an example from which trainees can learn.

8.58 pm

Mr. Colin Pickthall (Lancashire, West): I like to think of myself as a courteous man and I have no wish to be ungallant, but I do not think that I have ever heard such a load of ignorant tripe as the speech of the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland). It could have come only from someone who has never been near teacher training in her life. Indeed, I wonder whether she has ever been near teaching or schools with her eyes open.

In an attempt to understand why the Government should persist with this pathetic mutilated Bill after its terrible mauling in another place, I read some of the ponderings of the Centre for Policy Studies on teacher training and, in particular, I re-read a pamphlet entitled "Teachers Mis-Taught" by Sheila Lawlor of the CPS, who seems to have been responsible for what passes as the thinking behind Conservative policy on teacher education. It is interesting that Lawlor's pamphlet appears to have provided the structure for the Library briefing on the subject, although the latter is mercifully free of Lawlor's dogma assertions and errors of fact.

I read Lawlor's work and the Bill in the wake of 22 years' work at a former teacher training college. I emphasise what my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara) was trying to tell the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam—there are no such things as teacher training colleges any more and there have not been any since the mid-1970s. The fact that the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey), the Minister and the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam repeatedly referred to teacher training colleges shows that they are stuck in a time warp. The hon. Lady said that the people coming out of those training colleges were responsible for some of the horrors that she described—for example, the evidence of pupils being indoctrinated—as having happened 10 years ago. The colleges did not exist by that time.

I began my career in a training college which diversified into BA courses and other forms of work in the mid-1970s. It became fully diversified in the 1980s. I worked alongside many colleagues who were going through immense changes in their professional lives while fashions in education were dictated not by educationists but by politicians from Shirley Williams to Lord Callaghan, from Lady Thatcher, to Lord Joseph, to the present Secretary of State.

The pamphlet to which I referred is extraordinary because of its mixture of lies and virulent prejudices masquerading as argument. On the very first page, it states:

"the present system demands that all teachers are trained to teach in the same way, irrespective of subject, pupil or teacher".

That is simply untrue. It also states:

"Teachers have imposed on them in training courses and later, a single method of teaching, often at the expense of the subject itself".

That is also untrue.

We heard from the Secretary of State today that, to his pleasure, he has discovered that some tutors from higher education institutions have been going into schools. I have news for him: I was going into schools as a tutor of teacher education 24 years ago, and so were all my colleagues. We were teaching there and learning. He and the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth talked incessantly about the producer interest. The latter also said that schools are not involved in training. That is untrue.

Ms Lawlor also said that, given subject mastery, the teacher will learn "how" to practise with "time and experience". Practise on what and whom and to what effect we are not told. There follow 45 splenetic pages dressed crudely as research but based on a hatred of theory, a word that is trotted out as though it came from Dennis Wheatley. She tells us that education students can undertake theory

"so long as it is not linked with practice."

I have never heard such nonsense—what theory is not linked with practice? The pamphlet evinces a hatred of special needs education, a hatred of anything multicultural, of anything to do with gender and of anything contemporary.

Ms Lawlor's underlying desire, it seems, is the closure of the education departments of higher education institutions, which, coupled with the closure of local education authorities, as recommended by the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick), would leave schools and education in the hands of Government-appointed quangos stuffed with Tory ideologues.

The Secretary of State says—no doubt it will be repeated—that the choice of whether to go into the new system will remain. Opposition Members do not believe him. What will be the outcome if, as is happening now and as the SCOP—Standing Conference of Principals—survey suggests, schools do not take up the option in sufficient numbers? Only 12 head teachers out of about 1,300—

Mr. O'Hara: Out of 1,202.

Mr. Pickthall: Only 12 head teachers out of 1,202 said that they were not interested in participating in the exercise. If schools do not come in in sufficiently large numbers they will be dragooned—first bribed, but then dragooned—in precisely the same way as we have seen happen in the case of grant-maintained status.

I would not normally dignify this appalling piece by Ms Lawlor by referring to it in the House. However, I do so because it demonstrates clearly the paucity of thinking behind the Bill. When the Conservative Government consult, it appears that Ms Lawlor is the consultee. It is hard to find anybody else who agrees with the Government on the teacher education policies that are before us.

As a relief from Lawlorism—if I may use that expression—it is appropriate that we should remind ourselves of what exactly a student teacher has to undergo. I intended to go into that matter at some length, but my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms Morris) has done so much more clearly and brilliantly than I could. First, the student has to acquire subject expertise,

either through the PGCE route, in which case he or she already has it, or in an integrated way through the BEd or the BA(QTS).

Secondly, the student has to learn about the legal and social structure of schools and the education system, about health and safety regulations and practice, about child and adult psychology, about pastoral care, about the methodologies of teaching and about the functions of learning. He or she has to learn about what the curriculum is, what its component parts are and how to operate it, and a great deal more. All of that is what the Tories dismiss, with a simple sneer, as theory.

Trainee teachers have to prepare for practice—I have spent many years helping students with this—in structuring a timetable for the first time and in structuring individual lessons and groups of lessons. The last of those is a difficult and time-consuming business—to be referred to these days as episodes, I suppose. That has to be done for a variety of talents and for a variety of levels. Then comes the practice, in which the students are supervised not only by the school teachers but by the tutors with whom they have been working for many weeks. After the practice comes the process of evaluation and debriefing —again an extensive process—in school and in the higher education department.

Then the cycle starts again, ratcheted up a notch to a more sophisticated level. That is an immense and complex task. Given the stress that school teachers are under, particularly at present, it is impossible to imagine how they would cope with all that on top of their prime responsibility, which is to teach their pupils. Teaching, and not the training of students, is the job for which they are trained.

Of course, students are not expected to cope. I believe that, under a system like this, they are expected to flounder on their way through a new system. I quote again from the introduction to Ms Lawlor's pamphlet, which refers to the need

"to acquire experience of how to be a good teacher, often insensibly"—

I repeat, "often insensibly". Many smaller primary schools do not even have proper staff rooms in which a student can be taken aside and talked to. Certainly there is no spare staff time in which to do any of this work. Clause 12 says virtually nothing about the implications for resources and nothing about staff time, although there are clear hints, in the "Review of Pay and Conditions", that teachers may be required in future to participate. I should like the Minister to clarify that point.

In the circular of 23 November 1993 we were told that primary schools should take the lead responsibility for training—in this case, the training of class assistants—and for handling funds. There is nothing in the Bill about how even that task would be resourced. Even large secondary schools are squirming under the pressure caused by the increase in training weeks introduced by circulars 9/92 and 14/93. I know that from experience because my wife, who is the deputy head of a large comprehensive school and is responsible for that activity, tells me, in great detail, about it.

The Lords amendments made sensible changes, but unfortunately the Lords could not ditch the Bill entirely. We shall have to ditch it, because of the recent growth in partnership, which other hon. Members have discussed at length, and because of the necessity to work out the complexity of the costings, which are still not clear even in the existing partnerships. There is no doubt that they will present us with great difficulties. We should ditch it because it leaves no time to evaluate the recent pilot schemes. School-based initial teacher training is to be forced in without evidence, on the basis of dogma and an ignorant misunderstanding of what higher education and schools in partnership are trying to achieve.

Mr. Butler *rose—*

Mr. Pickthall: I shall not give way, if the hon. Gentleman does not mind. I am not trying to be discourteous, but I know that a couple of my hon. Friends want to speak, so I shall finish as rapidly as I can.

The partnerships achieved so far represent the response of institutions, students and schools to the perceived need for more class-based teaching. They are based on people's experience and day-to-day expertise. The Government seek to stop all that, and to impose the idiocy of Lawlorism, regardless of the consequences. Teacher education should be about partnerships and consortia, in which higher education must play a major part. Such partnerships have to grow and be negotiated—they cannot be forced.

Legislation should be enabling and fostering, not destructive, as the Bill is. It should ensure higher status for newly qualified teachers, the best quality of subject acquisition, a variety of experience in different schools —my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) talked about that—access on a daily basis to research-quality libraries and to technology and collaboration with peers and tutors, as well as the maximum possible classroom experience. The Bill is designed to achieve only the last of those aims and it does so only for reasons of dogma.

The Bill is based on a Grand Old Duke of York policy, for surely, having marched that nonsense up to the top of the hill, the Government, if they have the time, will have to march it back down again.

9.11 pm

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): What a pleasure it is to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall), who spoke so powerfully, with good sense based on experience. We have not heard much of that from Conservative Members.

The Bill was conceived in prejudice, spawned in rhetoric at Tory party conferences, and born in ignorance. What a pity that it was only half strangled in the other place before it came to us. It has been driven by dogma masquerading as raising standards. So here we are, picking over the remains of the Bill after its mauling in another place. I hope that, despite what the Secretary of State said, some of the chunks bitten off it in another place will not be replaced by means of a whipped vote here.

There is no question but that good teachers are a prerequisite for the good education of children. The right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) took us on a stroll down memory lane—but my experience was somewhat different from his. He was right to say that some of the emergency trained teachers were excellent, but equally some of them were not very good. In my experience, some of the best people who have come into schools in recent years are those who have taken either a

[Mr. David Jamieson]

university degree followed by a PGCE course or a four-year BEd course. Those are the people who have provided real quality in teaching in our schools.

I shall limit my brief comments to part I, which deals with the training of postgraduate teachers. The Secretary of State talked about raising the standards of teachers, and I have no quarrel with that. If we can find ways of doing that, I shall agree with them. The Secretary of State then said that 46 per cent. of teachers are not able to teach reading properly when they leave college. If any of the new proposals were to address the task of putting some of those shortcomings right, we on the Labour Benches would be voting for them.

The Bill contains a number of curious contradictions. It will remove the responsibility from those who know what they are doing and place it in the hands of those who do not know. It is little wonder that we are getting things wrong —or the Government, at least, are getting it wrong—if we consider the comments of the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) and the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey), who is not in his place at the moment.

The hon. Lady was talking about teacher training colleges that have not existed for almost 20 years. Asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara) to name one college, she named two universities instead. It is small wonder that the Government are getting things wrong when Conservative Members do not understand the basics of the subject.

The present system relies on a partnership between schools and higher education, and schools are currently very much involved in the process of teacher education. However, there are some strains on the present system, because there is sometimes a reluctance in schools to take on too many student teachers.

Even in large schools, as my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West pointed out, there are sometimes pressures not to take more than three or four students at a time, because of the amount of energy that that consumes of the existing teachers in the school. The main fault of the present system is that the teacher mentor role has not been properly resourced or properly funded.

We also need to consider the proposals in the context of the present situation. Schools are struggling to implement local management of schools. They are grappling with the constant change being brought about in the national curriculum. They are dealing with the testing and all the uncertainties that that has introduced, as well as with the new regime of inspection and, increasingly, they are dealing with children in schools who are challenging the authority of teachers. Many schools are barely coping with those things already, yet those very schools, which are now only just coping with all the so-called reforms that the Government are throwing at them, are being asked to do the job of training the teachers as well.

What effect will all that have on our schools? What about those schools which will do the training? The governors make the decision to put the proposal to the Teacher Training Agency, which then hands over that responsibility. Can the Minister, if he is listening, answer the following questions? Will he tell us what consultation there will be with parents whose children attend those schools? The proposals will seriously affect the children in those schools. If 10 or 15 student teachers are to be permanently taught at that school, what attention will be taken from the children there?

The Bill will draw good teachers away from the job that they are doing in the classroom and put them into the job of teaching teachers instead. When the governors put their proposals to the Teacher Training Agency, will the Minister tell us what consultation there will be with teachers? Teachers will need to change their contracts of work. I shall ask the Minister again: who will train the teachers to teach the new teachers? Where will the funding come from? How will we release those teachers from their schools so that they may perform that task?

There is another inconsistency in the Bill. Originally, before the House of Lords amended it and took out the proposal, it was suggested that five to seven-year-olds would be taught by people who were barely qualified at all —the so-called mums' army proposal. Yet part I proposes that those people, who barely have qualifications themselves, will be teaching the people who are to carry out the rest of the teaching in the school.

That seems to be quite extraordinary and the Minister ought to address that issue. How many of those training students would the Minister expect there to be in any one school? I hear that the cost-effective number is in the region of 15, and I am trying to picture a small primary school coping with 15 students in the school, as well as all the other pupils and all the other tasks.

Is the Bill not going to create a two-tier system of schools—those that are training teachers and those that are not? What will happen to those good schools which are presently working in co-operation with higher education institutions to train students?

The Bill will not help the postgraduate education of students, who must have a combination of academic study and school experience, and time to reflect on that experience in a neutral place. The students must have a grounding in the art and practice of teaching, and the effective pedagogy that goes with it. They must be well prepared outside school for practice inside it.

The Bill proves that there is a danger when fantasy becomes reality, when irrational remarks made to draw applause at the Tory party conference become real, when Sheila Lawlor's guide to solving Britain's education problems goes into print, and when the reader in the Conservative club sees last week's bird-brained idea from the inebriate on the corner bar stool turn into yesterday's leader in *The Sun*, and wakes up to find that it is today's Government policy.

That is the road to destruction of education. The Bill represents the ascendency of prejudice over good sense. It puts teacher education in reverse, and does nothing to improve children's learning. That is why we shall oppose the Bill.

9.20 pm

Mr. Bryan Davies (Oldham, Central and Royton): I have little to say that is good of the Bill, but at least it has given us the chance to engage in an interesting and, in some respects, stimulating debate about the fundamentals of education. It is a pleasure to take up the remarks of my hon. Friends the Members for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) and for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall), which

were based on their experience in education, as opposed to some of the prejudices of Conservative Members that have been on display.

What a desperate old nag the Secretary of State has entered into the legislative stakes this year. This old horse—the Bill—is running to placate the fierce right-wing challenge that the right hon. Gentleman always senses from within the Conservative party. Although he purports to come—some say that it is the reality—from a more liberal stable, his ministerial career largely belies it.

So we have a legislative measure that is largely anti-student and anti-teacher. It is meant to be a brisk, no-nonsense populist measure that will bring the student unions, and especially the National Union of Students, to heel. It is designed to put teacher training and education into a straitjacket of classroom-based experience. If it is implemented, it will produce not educators but education technicians.

Behind the Bill is a deeply flawed philosophy, if such a ragbag of prejudices can be called a philosophy. My hon. Friend the Member for Devonport rightly identified the antecedents of the Bill. The Secretary of State is pandering to the elements in the Conservative party—they comprise a substantial number—that respond to the word "union" like the dogs responding to Pavlov's bell.

The NUS and student unions generally are to get the same harsh and restrictive treatment that has been meted out to trade unions over the past decade. Does it not dawn on Conservative Members that student unions are not trade unions? They are very different. Their relationship to university life is integral. Universities are not teaching factories with operatives, workers and consumers. Instead, they are educational communities.

I know that the Thatcherites on the Conservative Benches say that there is no such thing as society, so how can they understand the concept of a community? Let us remind them that, in a free society, universities, with a degree of self-government and some independence from the state, are important in our national life. It must be recognised that students are a part of that community—they do not simply attend university: they are part of it.

The philosophy behind the Bill's approach to teacher education is also desperately flawed. Who, in any part of the House, doubts the significance of classroom experience? Who thinks that anyone was ever trained as a teacher without having classroom experience? But how can teachers teach without an understanding of their subject and the educational principles?

There was an interesting minor debate among Conservative Members in the early part of the debate, when three Members—the right hon. Members for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) and for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) and the hon. Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson)—wrestled with the issue of what teacher education should consist of.

From what I could discern, the right hon. Member for Brent, North believed on the whole that no training was necessary, that most teachers received gifts from God, and that one could readily identify those who were not gifted and should be booted out.

The right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden, in a thoughtful speech, spoke of the problems related to teacher training. She recognised that it was important to consider how best to train teachers and argued for classroom experience.

The hon. Member for Norwich, North argued strongly and passionately for the careful training and education of teachers, but, for the life of me, I was unable to identify whether he thought that classroom, school-based teaching alone would be sufficient.

With the Bill, the Secretary of State goes back to the 19th-century monitoring system. As the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) said, the Secretary of State has returned to the education of Nicholas Nickleby. Some Conservative Members think that they can identify that teacher education went badly wrong in the 1960s and produced degrees of incompetence in the literacy of our children today.

When I first came to the House in 1974, I was privileged to join Christopher Price, who then represented Lewisham, West, and the late Gerald Fowler, a Minister of State, in order to obtain money for a literacy programme—a minor pump-priming exercise that I am glad to say has, over the years, born substantial fruit in the development of the adult literacy movement in this country. In 1974, we were wrestling with millions of functionally illiterate people. The Government suggestion that the old forms of training and skills, and the old schools, produced a literate and numerate society is hogwash.

The Bill is a horse bred of populism and prejudice. The old nag is meant to chase around the parliamentary course once again. It has already been subject to some parliamentary scrutiny—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps the Secretary of State will listen. He has undoubtedly read the proceedings from the upper House and he must have realised what an appalling race the horse ran on that first outing. We all recall that, when it arrived at the starting gate in the other place, it had already lost a portion of its intended content. The mums' army proposal had already been jettisoned even before the Bill was published. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Pope) said, the jettisoning of that proposal was a precursor to the Government backing down on other proposals in the House of Lords.

But having then charged away on Second Reading in the upper House, the Bill ran into severe difficulties the moment that their Lordships began to consider the second part of the Bill relating to student unions and the National Union of Students. As Lord Beloff indicated, the Bill had succeeded in uniting the most reactionary vice-chancellor with the most radical student in opposition to what was being proposed.

Not only was the NUS against the proposal; so were vice-chancellors and university teachers. There was also widespread opinion in the House of Lords, which was reflected among Tory Members on the Secretary of State's own Back Benches, who had already expressed their reservations about the proposal. The clause then had to be withdrawn. What we face is a compromise that is not entirely to the liking of my hon. Friends. However, we recognise gains from a largely obdurate Administration when they occur, and we intend to support the change.

As for the Secretary of State, not even his most sympathetic colleague would refer to Lord Beloff as anything but a somewhat reluctant arrival in the Labour Lobby on that occasion. I can only assume that the Secretary of State must say that he can look after his enemies, but God protect him from his friends.

The poor old Bill then staggered off into the country, and was lost from view for a couple of months while the Government scratched their heads to find out how they could make the poor horse run again at all. On the Bill's

[Mr. Bryan Davies]

return to the upper House, it was about to be somewhat knackered again, as certain aspects of it proved unacceptable to their Lordships.

As my hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms Morris) and for Lancashire, West said, the House of Lords accepted a Labour amendment. We recognise that the Government now define it as technically deficient, but nevertheless it contains the principle which the House of Lords made clear—it does not believe that the training of teachers should be separated from higher education. Indeed, there should be no such divorce. We should recognise that divorcing the training of teachers from higher education would have the same impact as all divorces: it would be the children who suffered.

How easy will it be to organise such school-based courses? At present, the Government are proceeding with the legislation against the background of an experiment which is not even half-finished. An absolutely minuscule number of students are participating in the present scheme. Harrow school is involved in the scheme. I hope that I can quote Harrow school to Tory Members as having some authority in education. It has pulled out of a partnership arrangement with the Institute of London because of the strain on senior staff of coping with students. If one of the best-resourced schools in the country finds the strain of training the next generation of teachers extremely difficult, where will the Government find willing volunteers in the hard-pressed ranks of teachers in our state schools?

Consideration in the Lords has conferred some advantages. At least the upper House recognised that the Teacher Training Agency, which we shall subject to intense scrutiny in Committee should the Bill get a Second Reading, is obliged to restrict its research to matters directly related to its work. As my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) said, the success of students on any course, and certainly on courses concerned with teacher education and training, depends upon adequate resources, and for more than a decade the Government have set a record in impoverishing students.

The Bill received a mauling in the upper House, and even the truncated version has won few friends. Predictably, the most radical criticism on the Government side came from the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick), who told the Secretary of State that he will have a rough ride on the remaining stages of the Bill. The hon. Gentleman feels that the Bill does not go far enough, and he wants to revive what the Secretary of State now regards as quite impossible—the full-blown onslaught on the National Union of Students and student unions which the Secretary of State envisaged when he set about the Bill.

Far from satisfying Conservative interests and completing a jigsaw of education, the Bill is creating a jigsaw of prejudice about the development of British education—perhaps I should say, English education, because substantial parts of the Bill do not relate to Wales or Scotland.

The Secretary of State has not delivered what his party hoped and expected. Therefore, it is no surprise that the somewhat less than benevolent influence of the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) has been drifting around the Chamber, no doubt bent upon that restructuring of the parliamentary Conservative party which he alone thinks will enable it to survive.

This poor old exhausted Bill will not run well for the Secretary of State. Touchstone introduced his friend Audrey to the court in the Forest of Arden with the phrase, "A poor thing, but mine own." The Bill is a poor thing but the Secretary of State's own, but Touchstone, interesting character as he was in "As You Like It", was the fool.

The Secretary of State may try to make the horse run again, but we think that he is guilty of cruelty, and that he should be relieved of his burden. His friends should put him out of his misery, and they can do that by joining us and voting against the Bill. That is the only humane way to ensure that the Bill disappears, and that the Secretary of State saves what little face he has left.

9.38 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Tim Boswell): With the greatest charity, my only comment on the speech of the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Davies) is that they never come back and even when they are reshod they are liable to slip a shoe and leave themselves trailing in the race.

I am delighted to deliver the winding-up speech for personal reasons as well as those of policy. My wife trained as a teacher and many members of her family and quite a sprinkling from mine were teachers in their time. I therefore have an interest, as we all should have, in the vital subjects of teacher education and teacher training. In addition, exactly 30 years ago I was president of my own student junior common room, so I know something about these matters. We carried out a free and fair election and the beaten candidate is one of my constituents.

I was for a moment persuaded of the possibility that there might be a measure of consensus in the House on the measure. I refer the House to the opening words of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's blue paper on teacher training issued last autumn, from which the proposals are derived. The very first sentence stated:

"In education, the role of the teacher is central."

Indeed, it is essential. Most of us would accept that.

The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) almost surprised me by saying that she had one goal: to improve the quality of education. I cannot argue against her goal, although I find her means somewhat defective. She is still inexorably impaled on the crossover point of those twin searchlights which hold her fixed. One is ideological correctness and the other is vested interest. She cannot get out of it; she is not allowed to move because it would not be correct and in any case it would upset at least one of the teacher unions. So nothing comes out of the Opposition.

Despite the blandishments of my hon. Friend the Member for the City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth), we heard no clear answer on the hon. Lady's view of testing. She did not say yes, no or even "don't know". Equally, we had no condemnation from her of the remarkably stinging but entirely inappropriate if characteristic criticism from her clients—if such they be—the NUT, in relation to specialised teachers' assistants. We had nothing from the Opposition on that.

I come to such debates with one clear purpose in mind. If I had any tendency to what the theologians call doubts, I would soon lose them when I got here. If I had any worries about the Bill before I started, the Opposition would put them out of my mind.

If my hon. Friends think that the Labour party is static on these matters, the Liberal Democrats are still more so.

Neither made any attempt to address the present position. Somewhere between a quarter and a third of lessons delivered by new teachers are deemed unsatisfactory, 10 per cent. of new teachers are not up to the job and many new teachers themselves admit to unhappiness and uncertainty about their central role of delivering the essential educational attainment of reading. That cannot be right. Equally, when Opposition Members whinge or cackle about our proposals for the reform of student unions, can they honestly say that what has happened in the past has been entirely in order and desirable, when we all know that it has not?

In this long and interesting debate, there has been a remarkable contrast between the speeches of Opposition Members and the contributions from my right hon. and hon. Friends, which without exception have been thoughtful and positive. I should also record that they have been supportive of the Government. They reflect the reality which I concede has been expressed on both sides of the House. I give way to a fellow classicist.

Mr. Enright: While I accept that there is always party solidarity in these matters, is the Minister honestly telling the House that he agrees with every word spoken by the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick), whom I do not see in his place at the moment, let alone the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) in his divisive speech?

Mr. Boswell: If the hon. Gentleman sets up an Aunt Sally, it is not surprising when it is then knocked down. We are not a monolithic party and we do not have to agree with every last word. Unlike the Opposition, however, we are united in our determination to raise educational standards.

When the hon. Gentleman interrupted me, I was about to make the bipartisan point that both sides have admitted that teaching is a complex matter. As we are on the classics, it occurred to me during the debate that the most appropriate story that I could produce to the House was the one about the former professor of classics who took his turn on the golf course. He was not very good and his caddy became exasperated with his performance and eventually said, "Well, Latin and Greek are all very well, but when you come to this game you must have a head." That is precisely the point of these proposals. That man was placing a proper emphasis on moving from the academic grounding that was necessary or desirable to the practical execution which was essential in the task.

I shall respond to the points made as far as I can and if I overlook any I will write to hon. Members. Once again, we had a vacuum in the speech of the hon. Member for Dewsbury. We had a policy-free zone. Spinning around in the vacuum only two points of interest were discernible. Yet again, we had the stale call for a general teaching council. A general teaching council as envisaged by the hon. Lady would be merely a talk shop. It would not achieve anything. Because of her ideological positioning, she is unable to suggest anything stronger than a little chat and a discussion—as though it might ever be possible to proceed by consensus in the teeth of vested interests.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson), in an extremely thoughtful speech, put a much more helpful spin on a general teaching council. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has always said that he would consider the possibility of the teaching profession bringing forward a professional body to concern itself with standards in the form of a royal college of teaching, or something like that. That would be the right way to approach the matter, although I look forward to debating it again.

The hon. Member for Dewsbury, who is not paying attention at the moment, made much of one defeat by two votes that we suffered in the other place on a particular point when, frankly, their Lordships did not exactly conclude the matter, at a time when we defeated by a substantial majority in the other place an amendment seeking to establish a general teaching council. Yet again —the only other point that I want to select from the hon. Lady's remarks—we had the canard that schools would be forced to participate in the teacher training proposals. I can assure the House that that is not the case.

We then had a very interesting speech from my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson), in which he drew on his unmatched and unrivalled experience of running difficult schools with leadership. He taught us a few home truths and ran up a drainpipe to teach them to us.

The hon. Member for Hindburn (Mr. Pope) made a number of points. It will be the responsibility of the Teacher Training Agency to consider teacher supply. It will continue to do so based on the advice of and the general steer from the Secretary of State. That matter will continue to be looked at just as it is now. The hon. Gentleman should not confuse that with structural changes in the Bill.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold), another distinguished former Minister, specifically rejected a return to the past, but drew on that valuable past experience to emphasise the importance of teaching and delivering.

As for the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster), he keeps on droning away and occasionally tries to sting us, but he does not often succeed. He talks occasionally about general teaching councils and that was about all that I made of his speech.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North not only mentioned the general teaching council in a much more positive way, he emphasised the importance of standards and rigour. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms Morris) spoke as ever with some passion on that. Out of a speech with which I did not substantially agree, I must take the hon. Lady up on one point. All participating schools will require their student teachers to go into more than one school. That will be an essential part of the scheme.

My hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) made a characteristically trenchant and interesting speech. [HON. MEMBERS:Where is he?"] My hon. Friend advised me of the reason for his absence from the Chamber now and apologised. However, his spirit is with us. I assure my hon. Friend, in his absence, that his arguments will be carefully considered. As ever, these are not simple matters—as the Committee will discover. I look forward to debating them in detail.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) made a wide-ranging speech, although I had to be absent from the Chamber for part of it. Almost alone among Opposition Members, he is not frightened to confront the facts. I hope that that is not seen as an insult to him. The new proposals for the Open university to participate will provide some additional flexibility.

[Mr. Boswell]

My neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth, spoke strongly about the Opposition's constant inability to come to terms with earlier reforms and their amazing propensity for claiming credit for reforms when they are in place. It is reform at one remove. My hon. Friend referred rather alarmingly to teacher training as having softened the brains of a generation, but it was not my hon. Friend's brains that were softened.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) spoke interestingly about the Welsh aspect. I will reflect on his comments and communicate them to my colleagues. It will be for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales to determine the transfer of functions within Wales.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) spoke with great passion and illumination about what goes on in some of the worst boroughs in the delivery of education, and of the political correctness of some colleges of education. Despite the jeers of Opposition Members, those are the plain facts. If Opposition Members cannot see the problem, I invite them to consider it.

The hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) was in teacher training for 22 years, which may have been a year or two longer than he might have been. He was not able to advance a substantive argument, so proceeded by proxy—by referring to an article by a Conservative academic that is not part of the Bill. Just as there is no requirement for schools to participate in school-centred training, neither is there any requirement for individual teachers to do so. Additional resources will be made available by the agency to help make the scheme more acceptable and practical for schools.

The hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) was, as ever, strong on the rhetoric of which he accuses others. He referred to the implications for governors. It is entirely for them to bring forward their proposals on behalf of their schools. The hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Davies) attacked proposals for the National Union of Students that we have now changed. He referred in extenso to our philosophy. That is rather like the argument about a hidden agenda. Every time somebody refers to a philosophy, I metaphorically reach for my revolver because I know that the Opposition cannot have read the Bill and followed the arguments. We have no hidden agenda for driving higher education out of teacher training. We do not wish to force schools to assume responsibilities that they do not want. If we had a hidden agenda, we would not have provided in the Bill that students on training courses must be on degree courses or already be graduates. Many of our teachers are not, but all new teachers will be—except for the specific exceptions of licensed and overseas teachers.

At present, we approve every individual course of teacher training at every university and college of higher education. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State also approves and directly funds all school-centred courses. He can choose whatever rate he wants for that work. He has exactly adopted a level playing field between them. The hon. Member may be interested to know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State currently has the power to pursue any agenda that he wants. In a mood of characteristic humility and self-denial, however, he proposes to relinquish those sweeping powers in favour of a new and independent agency with an open and positive agenda. That agenda is set out in clause 1 of the Bill, and I invite the House to reflect on the agency's objectives: to raise the standards of teaching; to promote teaching as a career; to improve the quality and efficiency of all routes into teaching; and to secure the involvement of schools in all courses and programmes for the initial training of school teachers.

Are there any sinister motives in that? Are there any in the additional requirement that the agency should ensure that teachers are able to promote the aims of education set out in clause 1 of the Education Reform Act 1988? There are not. There is nothing in the Bill about driving out higher education or forcing schools to take on training.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: Does the Minister agree that one of the things that teachers find difficult in today's schools is the total lack of morale brought about by too many Government reforms? Does he feel that the Teacher Training Agency will do anything to improve that?

Mr. Boswell: I urge the hon. Lady to visit some schools and ask them. There are some very positive attitudes. If there is any problem, it is with some of the disinformation that is flying around. I hope that what I put on the record will help to disabuse the hon. Lady of that.

We believe in equal treatment of schools and higher education providers. We believe in a focused agency to take over—

Mr. Don Foster: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Boswell: This will be the last intervention.

Mr. Foster: On equality between schools and teacher training institutions, can the Minister give us an estimate of the number of students under the postgraduate certificate of education scheme who are likely to go into the school-based only system, and tell us whether he believes that the average unit cost for the two types of training will be the same, or will it be different?

Mr. Boswell: I am not prepared to give an estimate of what may happen in the next year or two. That will depend on the readiness of schools to come forward. The agency is charged with securing both quality and value for money. I simply cannot see why the proposals should be seen as a threat.

Equally, I cannot see why our proposals on student unions should be seen as a threat. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said in his statement last July, we believe in a firm foundation of principle for our reforms: choice, democracy and accountability, and the subordinate principle of the avoidance of victimisation. Those are now being debated in another place.

Our measures will ensure that students have power over the union, rather than the other way round. Student unions can focus on their primary role, which is to look after students, and not to promote the political objectives and careers of a few committed individuals. I remind the House that the old Adam is still around in colleges of education and student unions. For example:

"Within a psychosemiotic framework the shared reading lesson is viewed as an ideological construct where events are played out . . . children need to learn to opposition themselves in three interlocking contexts".

I thought that they were supposed to be learning to read and write.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam referred to those who dared to use the word "caveman" being marked down for not using the term "caveperson". All the cavepersons are on the Opposition Benches. It is nearly as bad with student unions. I went to visit a university and was greeted thus: "Picket. Big mistake. We are going to insist that one or two hundred students are ready to greet you."

"Join the picket, get your face on the telly and have some fun! Demand,"—

among other things—

"the withdrawal of the threat of voluntary membership."

What have they to be frightened of?

The Bill is a further reforming measure, taking its place with pride and confidence alongside those great reforming measures that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State catalogued. We will establish a Teacher Training Agency. We will make student union membership voluntary. We will promote proper behaviour by student unions within a framework of democracy and accountability and within the bounds of charity law.

I commend these reforms, and the Bill that takes them forward, to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 299, Noes 244.

Division No. 228] **[10 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Begg, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shs)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Roes, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*

Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. (Strgfd)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Taylor, Sir Teddy (Southend, E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'ter V)
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John (Bridlington)
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yH'th)
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'fld)
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald (Swansea E)
Anderson, Ms Janet (Ros'dale)
Armstrong, Hilary
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony (Newham NW)
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon (Dunfermline E)
Burden, Richard
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne (C'bridge)
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Campbell, Ronnie (Blyth V)
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander (Montgomry)
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David (South Shields)
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clarke, Tom (Monklands W)
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin (Livingston)
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan (Oldham C'tral)
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil (Llanelli)
Davies, Ron (Caerphilly)
Davis, Terry (B'ham, H'dge H'l)
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John (St Helens N)
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank (Birkenhead)
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don (Bath)
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie (Tottenham)
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Griffiths, Win (Bridgend)
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman (Cumbernauld)
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen N)
Hughes, Simon (Southwark)
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jackson, Helen (Shef'ld, H)
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry (Alyn and D'side)
Jones, Ieuan Wyn (Ynys Môn)
Jones, Jon Owen (Cardiff C)
Jones, Lynne (B'ham S O)
Jones, Martyn (Clwyd, SW)
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane (Lpool Brdgn)
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil (Islwyn)
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan (Eccles)
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony (Stretford)
Llwyd, Elfyn
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David (Shettleston)
Marshall, Jim (Leicester, S)
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin (Gt Grimsby)
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. (Wy'nshawe)
Morris, Estelle (B'ham Yardley)
Morris, Rt Hon J. (Aberavon)
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael (N W'kshire)
O'Brien, William (Normanton)
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Prentice, Ms Bridget (Lew'm E)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Robinson, Geoffrey (Co'try NW)
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie (Dundee W)
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)
Smith, C. (Isl'ton S & F'sbury)
Smith, Rt Hon John (M'ld's E)
Smith, Llew (Blaenau Gwent)
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel (Dunfermline W)
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Thompson, Jack (Wansbeck)
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Warsing, Robert N
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan (Sw'n W)
Williams, Alan W (Carmarthen)
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David (Bolton SE)

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Education Bill [*Lords*] [*Money*]

Queen's recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Education Bill [*Lords*], it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenses of the Secretary of State in consequence of the Act.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

10.16 pm

Mr. Bryan Davies: I should like to raise one or two points about the money resolution.

We have the usual formula—that there are no net cost implications in the new Teacher Training Agency's assumption of certain functions exercised by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the Secretary of State and the teaching as a career unit. We are told also that other staffing needs should be offset in part by manpower savings at the Department for Education. I should like to know what is meant by the latter in circumstances in which substantial functions are being taken on by the Teacher Training Agency. Never before have we seen any savings, in terms of bureaucracy, under this magical terminology, but I suppose that there is always a first time. However, the House is entitled to some comment from the Minister about that aspect of the money implications of the Bill.

My second question relates to a matter that I raised during the Second Reading debate. One significant school in the country—Harrow, a well-resourced public school of some repute—has withdrawn from its relationship with the Institute of Education in respect of the training of students. Does that mean that the costs that schools have to bear as a result of their participation in school-based teacher training will be greater than those incurred by Harrow in a partnership scheme? Harrow was unable to sustain the costs. If a school with such resources could not cope, what will be the implications for the generality of state schools in Britain when the Bill, if it is passed, comes into effect and the scheme begins to operate?

If experienced teachers are to be freed so that they can train students as effectively as the Minister suggested, will they not have to be withdrawn from other classes to concentrate on the support that they give to the students under their tutelage? Will that not have profound cost implications for schools? I ask that question against a background in which, perforce, the Government say that the success of the whole operation depends on full co-operation by schools, and that governing bodies will be able to decide whether their schools participate.

As we all know, under local management of schools the problem of costs has a continual impact on governors. One of the great anxieties besetting governing bodies in the discharge of the responsibilities recently placed upon them is how to balance their budgets. Yet the Secretary of State is introducing a Bill that will create additional burdens for schools in the training of teachers, while the Government apparently expect there to be no financial consequences.

I ask the Minister to respond to these questions. Would not the creation of a general teaching council to oversee such arrangements, as is advocated by the Labour party, be a far more cost-effective and less burdensome way of organising and controlling teacher training? Would not that solution be cheaper as well as more effective and more acceptable? Will the Minister reconsider that matter?

10.21 pm

Mr. Don Foster: Further to the points raised by the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Davies), I want to ask the Minister a couple of questions about the money resolution. We have often been told that the Conservative party is the party of sound finance. Yet, as ever, the money resolution gives the Government a blank cheque. It is important to have some idea of the size of that cheque. The Bill tells us that there will be few or no net costs. If that is true, the Minister must tell us which Peter will be robbed to pay Paul, or if there is to be a net cost, what it will be.

Unfortunately, on Second Reading we could not get answers that would have helped us to have some idea of the financial implications. During the Minister's summing up I asked him to estimate how many students were likely to be engaged in the entirely school-based teacher training that the Bill recommends. He told us that he was not prepared to make any estimate of the numbers. I also asked him to explain to the House whether there would be a cost differential between that form of teacher training and the more traditional form. We were given no answer to that question either. We need answers to both those questions if we are to have any idea what the costs may be.

I shall illustrate why those questions are important by referring to a scheme already in place. The Minister will be aware that the articled teacher training scheme, in which about 80 per cent. of the training is carried out in schools, costs about £10,000 per student over two years. That is about three times the average cost of training a student under the ordinary PGCE route. Clearly, if many students follow the new route, at three times the cost of the present scheme, that will impose a significant financial burden.

For example, if around 20 per cent. of PGCE students, of whom there are currently 16,500, operated under the new arrangements, it would mean that 3,300 students would follow the new route proposed in the Bill with what I predict will be significantly increased costs. To make that happen, there would have to be about 200 consortia and thousands of schools involved, and the increased costs would be significant. Significant amounts of money would have to be laid aside for giving teachers time off to do the additional work and to provide supply cover for them. Money would have to be spent on the assessment of the consortia to check for their suitability and, clearly, on the monitoring of quality in those consortia—something about which the Office for Standards in Education has already expressed concern in relation to the training of articled teachers.

It seems pretty clear that increased costs will exist and we need to have an idea of what those costs will be if the legislation is to go ahead. If the Minister says that there will be no net cost, the clear implication of that, which he must acknowledge, is that money will be taken away from other more traditional forms of teacher training.

One further question that I hope that the Minister will answer is what salary is intended to be paid to the chairman of the new Teacher Training Agency. We know that, recently, the appointment of the chairman to the funding agency of schools led to a salary of some £33,500 per annum for what is, apparently, a two-day-a-week job. I think that the House would very much like to know what sort of salary is envisaged for the chairman of the TTA and whether any salaries are intended to be paid to any of the other eight to 12 members of that agency.

10.26 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Mr. Robin Squire): On balance, I am relieved that the hon. Members for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Davies) and for Bath (Mr. Foster) chose to speak. I know that that pleasure is not shared by any of my hon. Friends, but it means that, after a long day, I have a chance to come to the Dispatch Box.

The reforms provided for in the Bill will achieve greater effectiveness and accountability in the use of public funds. I shall, in a moment, deal with the points raised by hon. Members. Part II of the Bill, on the reform of student unions, creates no new charges on and no new recipients of public funds. We are not proposing to change either the way in which money is distributed or the amount, on account of the student union reforms. They therefore strictly lie outside the scope of this resolution.

Part I of the Bill, as every hon. Member must now be aware, creates a Teacher Training Agency. It is for part I alone that we need the resolution. That is not because the agency will give rise to any increase in public expenditure. We have said clearly—I shall be happy to reaffirm it—that there will be no net cost. However, the agency will be a new recipient of public funds and it is right that that point should be covered by a money resolution.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow) *rose—*

Mr. Squire: May I get a little further down the line and then I shall give way, assuming that there is time? I am sure that there is.

As hon. Members heard on Second Reading, the agency will draw together a number of important functions currently carried out, in effect, by four different bodies. It will naturally, therefore, draw together the relevant funding which those bodies have previously been allocated in respect of teacher training—part of the point that the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) raised a moment ago. To remind the House, the four bodies are the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, which advises the Secretary of State on individual courses, teaching as a career unit—also known as TASC—which promotes teaching as a career, the Department for Education itself, which approves all courses of teacher training and funds school-centred training courses, and the Higher Education Funding Council for England, which funds all courses at higher education institutions.

Dr. Godman: Does the agency have any role to play in the assessment of the training qualifications of teachers residing in other European Union member states who wish to teach here? If that is the case, what estimate has been made concerning the cost involved in such an assessment?

Mr. Squire: My understanding of the position—I shall happily write to the hon. Gentleman if it is different—is that we are talking of initial teacher training and, above all, that those entering it must be graduates. Assuming that the person from another country had an accepted graduate qualification—subject to me verifying what I am about to say outside this place—I assume that he or she could come within the purview of the proposal.

Dr. Godman: I do not want to delay our proceedings, but the Minister will know that if an English teacher seeks to teach in a Scottish school, he or she has to be approved by the general training council. Would that be the position with the proposed agency, where—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That has nothing to do with the money resolution.

Mr. Squire: I am advised that I should ignore the hon. Gentleman's intervention.

The Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education and the teaching as a career unit will close, if this is not obvious from my previous comments, when the agency is set up. The Department for Education will have reduced functions in this area.

The hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton made arguably excessive mention of Harrow, the well-known independent school. It decided to withdraw from the scheme under which it was offered a sum by the Institute of Education to play a part in a school-centered training scheme. It was free to do that, as are schools free to go in or to go out of school training. Harrow's action means no more and no less than that.

As for £4,000 per student, that is the same sum that higher education institutes receive. The moneys go directly to schools to use as they wish. It is for schools to decide whether the sum is enough, and a number have already done so. As hon. Members will be aware from the opening speeches this afternoon, from September about 450 students are expected to be trained by some 16 consortia. Other establishments have not yet so determined, and some may never do so. They have the freedom to take that course.

The hon. Member for Bath asked whether I could estimate the number of students that the Government believe will come through school-centred training. It is impossible to give such an estimate at this stage. At present, out of about 60,000 would-be teachers, just over 20,000 are graduates and, therefore, are potentially within the area that could be affected by the Bill. As I have said, about 450 students are expected to be trained from September out of a total of about 23,000. The move from there will depend on how would-be teachers wish to train, the number of schools that come forward and the numbers of the consortia that are accepted as providing a reasonable level of training and value for money. Everything flows from that. Like anyone else, I cannot make predictions at this stage.

The Bill does not contain a recommendation for school-centred training but it will allow it to take place alongside other training. It is neutral on school-centred training versus the more traditional route. The Teacher Training Agency will, however, fund all forms of post-graduate training in this respect.

The greatest part of the agency's budget will be for the support of courses of initial teacher training. The majority of such courses are currently funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England. To the extent that funding is going to the HEFCE for that purpose, there will be a transfer of the funding from the HEFCE to the TTA. That will pass to the agency during 1995, which will take over the relevant funds from the funding council, the budget of which will be reduced accordingly.

Mr. Don Foster: Is it the Minister's estimate or intention that the cost per student for training through each of the two approaches will be the same or, as is the case for

articled teacher training, will the cost for more school-based training be higher? Will the Minister clarify the position?

Mr. Squire: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman because he raised a small point that I wanted to take up, and I shall do so now. The answer to his question is that the costs will be broadly similar. The Teacher Training Agency, apart from its quality objective, also has a value-for-money dimension built in. The hon. Gentleman may wish to know that the articled teacher scheme is being phased out, not least on the ground of the high cost, which the hon. Gentleman mentioned.

The financial provisions are straightforward and uncontentious, and hon. Members need have no concerns about the Bill's funding implications. We believe that the Bill and new funding arrangements will lead to significant improvements in the deployment of resources for initial teacher training and I therefore commend the motion to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Education Bill [*Lords*], it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenses of the Secretary of State in consequence of the Act.

Laboratory Furniture Industry

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

10.35 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise in an Adjournment debate a matter of some importance, not only to my constituents, but to those of a number of my hon. Friends whom I am pleased to see in the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) has a constituency interest. I am delighted to see my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack), who not only has a constituency interest, but is to reply to the debate in his capacity as Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

As my hon. Friend knows, in June 1996 the Ministry expects to open a new £60 million central science laboratory in Yorkshire in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway), who has taken a great interest in the subject. I am pleased to see him present this evening. The contract for the supply of the building and the fittings in it has been awarded to a consortium of two well-known British contractors, John Laing Construction and Haden Young. John Laing Construction is now in a position to place an important contract approaching £2 million for the laboratory furniture for the new central science laboratory. It will be a prestigious contract and something of a showpiece when it is finished.

When the specifications were originally being drawn up by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food it did not think that it could obtain the equipment in this country and the specification was based on a foreign supplier. John Laing Construction quoted for the contract on that basis. But after an exhaustive analysis, John Laing is now satisfied that it is possible to purchase the equipment in Britain from the firm Cygnet Laboratory Furniture, which has factories in Bolton and Blackpool. That company is the leading British supplier, employs more than 100 people and has many customers, a number of whom have had contracts of more than £1 million with the company. They include many Government Departments, the national health service, various universities and well-known British manufacturing companies such as ICI, Zeneca, Unilever, Wellcome, British Nuclear Fuels and Boots. Laing is currently carrying out a contract for Ciba-Geigy, which includes Cygnet's laboratory furniture. I have a letter from Mr. Woolf, the project manager at Ciba-Geigy, in which he says how delighted he is with the progress of the £1.2 million contract.

In January this year there was a red letter day for the Cygnet business because the investors in the company decided to raise an additional £4 million of equity to help the company pursue its strategy. Some £1 million was raised by the Royal Bank of Scotland and £3 million was raised by S.G. Warburg Securities. I am delighted to see here tonight my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth), who so ably represents that company's interests in the House. That money was raised only after exhaustive analysis by analysts from the City who visited the company, looked carefully at its proposals and judged the new management who had been brought into the business the previous year.

[Mr. Peter Thurnham]

The money was raised through the holding company, Sycamore Holdings—a business with an annual turnover of £20 million, focused on high quality office and laboratory furniture. Cygnet has a turnover of some £8 million a year, and was founded in Bolton in 1946. Its corporate mission now is to become Europe's leading laboratory furniture manufacturer. In that mission, it is much encouraged by the numerous statements that have been made that manufacturing lies at the heart of our economic recovery. Indeed, during Prime Minister's questions on 8 March, the Prime Minister said:

"I am delighted that we are making . . . and selling more at home and . . . abroad."—[*Official Report*, 8 March 1994; Vol. 239, c. 148.]

On 15 February, the Secretary of State for the Environment launched a Government-backed task force to reduce imports into the construction industry. I quote from the press release:

"The substantial trade deficit in building materials has persisted throughout the recession. It must now be attacked."

In fulfilling the Government's wish to reduce imports, John Laing Construction is delighted that it has been able to establish to its full satisfaction—it must be remembered that Laing's bear the full contractual responsibility for delivering to the Ministry's specification—that Cygnet would be the best supplier. It would have the best quality and the best on-site performance. What is more, it can offer a lower price than the product which is currently nominated. It can reduce the price to the Government by £70,000 in the initial contract. That would be followed by considerable after-sales economies through being able to supply as the customer requested to suit any requirements without the difficulty of purchasing from abroad at a higher price.

So far, my hon. Friend and the Ministry have rejected the proposal that Cygnet Laboratory Furniture should supply because of three independent reports which were prepared last autumn before the company enjoyed the benefit of the new finance and the full benefit of the new management which came into the company last year. When I raised the matter with the Prime Minister, I received a letter on 28 March in which my right hon. Friend said:

"Advice was taken from three sets of independent private sector consultants . . . MAFF's conclusion was that despite the apparent saving, the risk to quality standards was sufficiently great that it could not be guaranteed that the contract would deliver value for money."

Both Cygnet Laboratory Furniture and Laing's dispute the findings of those three independent private sector consultants. I learnt today that one of them never visited the factory. Of the other two, one was a firm of architects and the other was a firm of construction project managers. Neither of them is an expert in manufacturing and therefore is hardly able to establish definitively whether the company was best able to produce.

The reports are now obsolete. They were prepared before the refinancing by the company and before the current programme of completing quality assurance, with BS5750 audit arrangements being put in soon. In a letter to me, Laing's confirmed that it is satisfied that the quality assurance procedures can be established in good time for production to take place.

What we need now is a proper independent consultant's report based on a firm that has expertise in manufacturing. I would like to see such a report put forward. Indeed, at a meeting this afternoon with departmental officials, I said that I was resolved to commission such a report myself if that would help the Government to come to the right decision.

There is a danger that the Ministry may be stuck in a time warp of last autumn's obsolete surveys without looking at the current position and the current improvements. The firm now has professional management with two directors who qualified at INSEAD—an institution which bears favourably on any worldwide analysis. I gained a management qualification from Harvard Business school and the Cranfield Institute of Technology in this country, and I know that INSEAD is an excellent establishment. This is a company with excellent management who are backed by the City after its analysts had looked closely at them. They and Laing's are satisfied that Cygnet will make a quality product that will more than meet the Department's specifications.

A mock-up for the benefit of officials was constructed at Ryedale at the suggestion of Laing's, but I understand that officials were instructed not to go to see it. It has been re-erected at the factory in Blackpool and I have a picture of it here. It is an excellent example of the work that the firm can do and I hope that the Minister will have an opportunity to look at it. It has convinced all those who are most closely involved and Laing's in particular that the firm makes a quality product and can offer savings.

I ask the Minister to back the judgment of British investors and the contractual judgment of Laing's, which bears the responsibility for the matter, and to forget the obsolete consultants' reports which were prepared last year. I again refer the Minister to the words of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. At the press conference at which he launched the Government-backed task force to reduce construction imports he concluded:

"I believe there is a growing recognition that the future of this industry lies in developing co-operative forms of working and turning away from both conflict and narrow sectional interests.

But if the vision of a new co-operative future is to be made real, it will call for leadership. Who will provide that leadership? . . . This is sensitive territory but it should not be sacred."

I will play my part. I am prepared to commission a report from independent manufacturing consultants which will show that the firm is perfectly capable of delivering to the Department's specifications on time and that it will fully meet all the customer's requirements. I ask the Minister to have another look at the matter, and to accept that there is a British supplier who can do the work.

I should like to leave time for my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South to contribute to the debate.

10.46 pm

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister and to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) for allowing me to contribute to the debate.

I am concerned on behalf of my many constituents who work for Cygnet whose factory site in Blackpool can be clearly seen from the end of the road in which I live. When I am at my constituency home every weekend, it is a constant reminder of the importance of the issue.

One of the ironies of the debate is that it will be answered by the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack), whose constituency is next door to mine. Many

of his constituents also work for this company. It is helpful to note not only the involvement of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East, but the fact that the Under-Secretary of State for Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville), is also in the Chamber. I know that he shares my concern, and the fact that my hon. Friends the Members for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) and for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) are also concerned reinforces our anxiety about the matter.

The Government, whom I strongly support, have a British supplier and many British jobs are at stake. The company can deliver at a saving of £70,000 of taxpayers' money a product that we all believe is as good as a German product. I should not like to think that the Government would risk awarding the contract to a German company and exporting the jobs of my constituents and those of my hon. Friends abroad.

I appreciate that there were problems in the company when the reports were prepared last autumn, but I share the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East that a fresh look is appropriate. All the original reports predate the 15 January refinancing which Warberg successfully arranged. The standards of analysis that had to be set for City institutions to take up the rights issue and involve themselves in that refinancing were extremely strict. They would not have agreed to put their money and that of their investors into that company if they had not felt that it had a good future and that its products were of a high quality.

Subsequent to the refinancing and with the management which came into place last year, and which is now in full control of the company, there is every opportunity for independent consultants to look again at the matter. Perhaps the fact that one departmental official I know visited the company very shortly after that refinancing was little more than rubber stamping previous consultants' decisions.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East rightly pointed out that the consultants who produced those previous reports were not experts in laboratory furniture. There is a strong case for a fresh report. I firmly believe that that report is likely to result in confirmation of the view that we all hold that the company is capable of delivering a very high quality product to MAFF's fullest specifications. I have been round the factory and I have seen the high standards there.

We must also bear in mind what the Secretary of State for the Environment, my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), said in a Government announcement about the balance of trade in the construction industry. That announcement postdated the company's refinancing. He pointed out that there was a negative balance of trade in the construction industry and that he wanted to see more construction work going to British companies.

In this case, a major British construction contractor, Laing, wants to use another British company, Cygnet, and believes that Cygnet can deliver the required quality.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): My hon. Friend began his remarks by saying that whenever he is in his constituency he has a constant reminder of the Cygnet factory. The point he made about the quality of the laboratory equipment goes to the heart of the issue. We want the laboratory in Ryedale. We warmly welcome it. It will be the best agricultural science laboratory in Europe. It must, as a consequence, have the best equipment of any laboratory of its kind in Europe. Many thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of people will visit that laboratory over the years, and it will not be as successful for Britain if it does not have British equipment in it.

Mr. Hawkins: I agree with my hon. Friend.

In view of the time, I close my remarks by calling on my hon. Friend the Minister to reconsider the matter and to say that there are sufficient reasons for a fresh analysis to be made. In the interests of our constituents who work there, I strongly urge him to do so.

10.52 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jack): I realise that there has been considerable interest in the debate. I am interested to see my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) in attendance and my hon. Friends the Members for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway), for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson), for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) and for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth). Such is the interest across the country that they have all attended the debate. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on securing tonight's Adjournment debate and my hon. Friend and near neighbour the Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) on his contribution.

We have heard this evening some criticisms from my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East about the way in which MAFF has acted on the contract. He will also know, however, that there has been no reluctance on our part to discuss the issue with him or with my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South. Many of the points that I shall put to him today were aired at a meeting he had with my noble Friend Lord Howe on 24 February. Only today, he also had the benefit of discussing the contract with our permanent secretary, and with my right hon. Friend the Minister.

Much has been made of the intense interest created in the project. Although my constituency adjoins Blackpool, South and much as I would dearly love to see a British company win the project, I shall be putting on record some of the reasons why we are in the present position.

When a member of the company used a company employee as a way into my constituency advice bureau to lobby for the project, I realised then that there was a particular intensity in the way that the lobbying on a political level had been carried out for that particular project. Despite all that, even today we made the opportunity for our permanent secretary to speak with my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East. He had also had the benefit of a letter on the matter from the Prime Minister, laying down his position and making clear his support for the project.

My hon. Friend will know that at the heart of the matter is the Ryedale laboratory. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale pointed out, it is at the heart of MAFF's work in the vital areas of the safety and nutritional value of the food supply. It will also look at diseases and pests affecting crops and agricultural produce. The laboratory's work is highly specialised, dealing with analyses which can involve the identification of minute quantities of impurities at levels down to one part in billions. To achieve that degree of accuracy will require laboratory equipment and furniture of a high specification and proven track record.

[Mr. Michael Jack]

In early 1991, it was Ministers who agreed the project in principle. Work began on its detailed specification as part of the competitive tendering process. The skilful completion of this task by MAFF officials and their advisers had already reduced what started out as a £75 million contract to one priced at £60 million, fulfilling in every way our wish to achieve the best value for money.

Aspersions have been cast in this debate on the qualities of MAFF's advisers in the matter. I put on record that they have been involved, for example, in work on a Glaxo contract valued at some £500 million, of which £10 million was for laboratory furniture. In addition, our architects, RMJM, have designed and specified for 20 laboratories in the past five years. So they are no Johnny-come-latelys to this exacting area of activity.

As I said, the skilful completion of the task had reduced the contract to £60 million. In June 1992 we went out to tender and the contract was won by Laing-Haden in December 1992. Every aspect of the project was the subject of detailed specification. From the outset the principal contractors would have known that it was they, not Ministers, who would be awarding contracts to suppliers for all the items involved in building and equipping the laboratory. They would also have known that MAFF and its advisers would have to be kept fully informed of who the project suppliers were to be and of the requirements involved, should they wish to propose a change in a supplier. Such a move would also require MAFF's approval.

So what happened over the question of laboratory furniture? The specification written by the project's architects, RMJM, the project manager, Symonds, and the cost consultants, Turner and Townsend, all of whom, as I have said, are experts in this field, called for furniture with special surfaces which could be regularly deep cleaned. The units would also have to be interchangeable and easy to move, as well as being robust and durable. Finally, and most importantly, the architects advised that the laboratory furniture should come from a standard range so that the track record of the product could be clearly demonstrated. That bears tribute to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale in terms of the quality of the equipment in the laboratory. The specification would have to be higher than normal in laboratory terms.

By any standards the order is large, valued at around £2 million, or the equivalent of some 3,000 units of furniture. As the main contractor, Laing-Haden, was also aware, the contract required it to name a number of key suppliers or sub-contractors, including the one for laboratory furniture. That was so that we could be sure of the track record of the proposed firm and we could reduce the openings for the main contractor to Dutch-auction packages after the main contract had been awarded. Sub-contractors' organisations regularly complain to the Government about that practice. In addition, we could prevent the main contractor from trying to substitute an inferior product at a later date. That is also a constant problem in the building world.

Implicit in that arrangement was the Ministry's right to refuse any proposed sub-contractors or suppliers. Main contractors were also aware that under the contract they could ask for a named supplier to be changed, but that that would be allowed only if the contractor put forward a new firm which clearly offered substantial benefits over that named, or if the named supplier could no longer fulfil the terms of the sub-contract. Those two criteria govern all proposals to change suppliers.

So how did Laing-Haden react to those specification requirements? During the tender preparation stage in September 1992, Laing-Haden initially proposed a British laboratory furniture manufacturer for this section of the work, but our advisers recommended that that firm failed to meet the specified requirements by a wide margin. They told us that the company's standard range fell well short of the requirements and that its proposals to manufacture a custom-built range lacked credibility. Acting on the advice of its professional advisers, the Ministry rejected that firm. Laing-Haden accepted that, and its response was to research the market place again. As a result, Laing-Haden proposed Waldner MSA of Germany, one of the leading manufacturers of laboratory furniture in Europe. I repeat that Laing-Haden proposed Waldner MSA. At that stage, Laing-Haden could have proposed Cygnet Laboratory Furniture, but it did not choose to do so. Neither did it even mention Cygnet to our officials.

Waldner's laboratory furniture was from its standard range, and it was assessed by the Ministry and its advisers as capable of meeting the specification for the project. The equipment offered differed in some minor aspects from the precise terms of the specification, but not so significantly as to affect its ability to meet the main requirements. In addition, Waldner had a proven track record and also had in place ISO 9000 quality assurance systems.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my hon. Friend allow me to intervene?

Mr. Jack: Perhaps my hon. Friend will allow me to make a little progress, because there is much that I want to say in response to the great deal of information that he gave the House.

As a result, Laing-Haden wrote Waldner into the contract as the supplier of laboratory furniture. At that stage, the whole contract was signed and sealed by the Ministry and Laing-Haden on 22 December 1992. Design work started in January 1993 and construction began in earnest that summer. As far as the Ministry and its advisers were concerned, the supplier of the laboratory furniture was settled.

While all that was going on, we learnt that, despite the fact that Laing-Haden had specified Waldner in the contract, during 1993 Laing-Haden circulated the requirement for the laboratory equipment to a number of alternative suppliers. We first became aware of that in October 1993, when Laing-Haden brought on to the site some examples of the standard range of furniture produced by Cygnet Laboratory Furniture Ltd.—nearly one year after Laing-Haden had written Waldner into the contract.

Cygnet has a factory in Bolton and another in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my hon. Friend give way now?

Mr. Jack: I should like to make a little more progress.

Cygnet's samples did not meet the specification, and that was accepted without demur by Laing-Haden. In December last year, however, Laing-Haden brought on to the site prototypes of the laboratory furniture range that Cygnet claimed would meet the specification requirement. Three reasons were advanced for that suggested change in

supplier: Cygnet was nearer to the site than Waldner and thus should be able to offer a faster response; Laing-Haden offered the Ministry a £70,000 inducement under the contract to agree to the change to Cygnet; and Cygnet had already supplied laboratory furniture to a number of leading UK companies.

Representatives of the Ministry—including the central science laboratory—project manager, architect and Laing-Haden visited Cygnet's factory at Blackpool at the beginning of January this year. They reported back serious doubts in the minds of the Ministry's advisers and officials about Cygnet's ability to complete that large order successfully. The prototypes were one-offs and not from a standard range, and as such had no track record to commend them. Our advisers also expressed the view that the factory's production layout and the work in progress there did not engender confidence. No quality control system was in place, the range of laboratory furniture proposed for the contract had no track record, and the firm had not completed a laboratory furniture contract anywhere near the size of that required for Ryedale. In addition, independent financial checks made on Cygnet and on Sycamore Holdings—the parent company—showed that the latter had a negative net worth, and guarantees were strongly advised in any dealings with it.

In conclusion, the Ministry's three professional advisers were unanimous in their recommendation that the Ministry should not allow Laing-Haden to change the supplier of laboratory furniture from Waldner MSA—the firm named by Laing-Haden in the contract—to Cygnet.

Mr. Thurnham: The advisers that my hon. Friend mentioned, who were involved in the project from the beginning, based the specification for the laboratory furniture on the German company's own range. That is why it was difficult for Laing-Haden initially to put forward anything other than the Waldner product. It was only after a period of time that Laing-Haden was able to establish that the product could be satisfactorily made in this country. The three so-called independent consultants who visited Cygnet were the same consultants who originally specified the German equipment.

Mr. Jack: I do not think that my hon. Friend was listening when I pointed out at the beginning that a British company was there. The specification was drawn up a long time before Waldner became involved. It was not specified around the Waldner range. It is interesting and ironic that, when Laing-Haden cast further doubt on Waldner in its own mind by trailing that project around, the alternative that it suggested was not Cygnet, but a Dutch company called Luntri—such is its interest in the matter. We have bent over backwards to try to accommodate—

Mr. Thurnham: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Jack: I have given way to my hon. Friend, and I want to conclude my remarks.

We have bent over backwards to try to take into account the representations made to us by the company, particularly with reference to its refinancing. As my hon. Friend knows, one of our officials recently visited the company to look again at the units. What he found, in effect, was that nothing—

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at five minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 4 May 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND (PROPERTIES AND INVESTMENTS) ORDER CONFIRMATION

Mr. Secretary Lang presented a Bill to confirm a Provisional Order under section 7 of the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, relating to Church of Scotland (Properties and Investments); and the same was read the First time; and ordered to be considered on Tuesday 10 May and to be printed. [Bill 72.]

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Singapore

1. **Mr. Gallie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with Singapore.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): Our relations with Singapore are excellent and are particularly close in the fields of trade, education and defence.

The Singapore Prime Minister, Mr. Goh Chok Tong, paid a very successful visit to this country two weeks ago, during which he had wide-ranging discussions with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and other colleagues. The two Prime Ministers agreed that every effort should be made to maintain and strengthen our ties. Singapore is our largest export market in south-east Asia. British exports last year grew by 24 per cent., and are now worth £1.4 billion. My right hon. Friend and Mr. Goh agreed to the establishment of a Singapore-British business council further to enhance co-operation between the private sectors of our countries, including in third countries such as China and Vietnam.

Mr. Gallie: I thank my right hon. Friend and particularly welcome his comments on the trading links. Did my right hon. Friend discuss with Ministers in the Singapore Government the issue of law and order and the means by which they had controlled vandalism and crimes of violence—in particular, the use of corporal punishment? If so, has my right hon. Friend discussed those issues with our right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary?

Mr. Goodlad: I shall refer my hon. Friend's views to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Greece

2. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his assessment of Greece's commitment to the policies of NATO and the European Union.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): The Greek Government are committed to the policies of NATO and the European Union. [*Laughter.*]

Mr. Worthington: Well. That raised a laugh.

Is not the Minister really as disturbed as I am that the President of the European Union and also a member of NATO should unilaterally impose a blockade on Macedonia; should undermine sanctions as much as it can; should have withdrawn airborne warning and communication systems crews from activities; and should be involved in or suspected of terrorist activity on the Albanian border? Is not the Minister really as concerned as I am that no obstacle will be put in the way of Serbia's pursuit of a greater Serbia by the Greek Government?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We regret that Greece has imposed a trade embargo against the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia. That issue is now to go to the European Court of Justice. I hope that Greece, particularly as it has the presidency during these six months, will reconsider its policies before the matter has to be resolved legally.

Mr. Lidington: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is quite outrageous for Greece to be in receipt of large sums, effectively from British taxpayers, through EC cohesion funds, while the Greek Government are making an already dangerous situation in the Balkans still more unstable through this illegal and unwarranted embargo against Macedonia?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We recognise that the situation in Macedonia is potentially unstable and threatens to get worse if the trade embargo persists. For those reasons, we support the action of the European Commission in taking the matter to court.

Mr. Trimble: Surely the action of the European Commission on this matter is inadequate. It is foolish to hang around waiting for the European Court of Justice, whenever it might come to consider the matter. Is not there a consistent pattern of action on the part of the Greek Government, who are clearly trying to destabilise their northern neighbour? Surely it is contrary to membership of the European Union for a member state to be trying to foment a war on its border, contrary to the policy of the Union—because that is the goal towards which Greek policy is clearly driving.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have made our concerns known to the Greek Government in the clearest possible terms. We recognise the dangers inherent in the policy, but Cyrus Vance is pursuing mediation between the Macedonian and the Greek Governments, so it is possible that the matter under dispute may be resolved amicably before the court case becomes necessary.

Bosnia

4. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations he has had over future United Nations operations in Bosnia in the light of recent events.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I am in regular touch with colleagues in the Security Council and NATO, and with those from other troop-contributing countries, about the UN operation in Bosnia, now and in the future. We are also working with close allies and with the Russians to step up the search for a permanent and negotiated settlement.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that although the British Government reacted in an exemplary way to General Rose's request for more troops in Bosnia, the same could hardly be said for other countries? Given that strong moral position, are not the Government well placed to urge for a more positive way forward for the United Nations in future, possibly including a redefinition of the UN mandate?

Mr. Hurd: There has been some progress since we took the initiative in New York by supporting the Secretary-General's appeal for more troops; he wanted 10,600 more troops to police the Sarajevo and central Bosnian ceasefires. Early responses amounted to undertakings to provide 8,500 troops, and 2,500 new troops are already in theatre including, as my hon. Friend said, 905 from the United Kingdom. Others have come from France, Spain, Russia and the Ukraine, so there is progress. We should certainly like it to be faster, and now that the United States has permitted the Security Council to lift the financial barrier, I hope that those who have promised troops will bring them forward quickly, and that those who have not promised troops will consider doing so.

Mr. Wareing: Has the Secretary of State had time to consider General Rose's remarks about the way in which we were all misled about the amount of destruction in Gorazde, and about the casualty list? We are told that some of the so-called casualties used the lift to Sarajevo simply to gain their freedom. Is not it time that the right hon. Gentleman spoke to the media experts, who for the most part reside in Sarajevo and keep telling us everything that comes through the propaganda machine of Sarajevo's Muslim-controlled radio?

Mr. Hurd: General Rose has objected to the way in which some off-the-record remarks were picked up by a certain newspaper. I would not advise the hon. Gentleman to give too much credence to the report in question.

Mr. Oppenheim: Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the fact that although we all deplore the actions of the Serbs, many of those who now urge us take tougher action would be the first to turn against the Government as soon as a British soldier was killed, the aid effort was impeded or a Serbian school was accidentally bombed? If the policies of many of those Johnny-come-lately, get-tough-from-afar proponents of action had been implemented in the past we should have been left without the troops to carry out our present policy. Does my right hon. Friend accept that most of my hon. Friends and I feel that, in immensely difficult circumstances, his has been the best possible policy?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. That was a rare tribute on this subject, and I am the more grateful for it because of that. We have certainly been prudent and have asked practical questions about any proposal for the deployment of troops. When we have been satisfied on the basis of professional advice that a measure is justified on the ground, we have been among the first to contribute. As my hon. Friend says, that is in contrast to the attitude of some people, especially some commentators, who have been anxious to urge everybody forward but who bear no responsibility for the consequences.

Dr. Howells: Given the reports of a considerable build-up of Bosnian Serb forces in the Posavina corridor in north-east Bosnia, will the Secretary of State press for an immediate preventive deployment of UNPROFOR troops in that area, backed up by adequate air cover, to act as a deterrent to what in the context of Macedonia he has described as adventurism, by the Serbs or by anyone else in the Sava valley?

Mr. Hurd: I am worried about the Posavina corridor, as are our allies. Brcko is occupied by the Serbs, but Muslim troops surround it and the corridor is very narrow. We are doing our best, both in New York and on the ground, to prevent a further flare-up in that corridor.

Middle East Peace Talks

5. **Mr. Clappison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the peace process in the middle east.

Mr. Hurd: I am sorry for the delay, Madam Speaker, but we are a little short of Ministers today. [*Laughter.*]

I warmly welcome the conclusion of the agreement on the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza strip and Jericho area and the related economic agreement. This is an historic step which has our full support. I hope that it will be followed by further progress along the other tracks of the peace process.

Mr. Clappison: I join my right hon. Friend in welcoming the historic progress being made today by the Israelis and the Palestinians, but does he agree that the future peace and stability of the region would be greatly assisted by economic growth and that trade has a role to play in promoting that? Will he keep under review measures that would assist the flow of trade between this country and that region?

Mr. Hurd: Indeed—and on the whole our exports have held up well. There has been a substantial increase of about 50 per cent. in our exports to Israel year on year. At the beginning of last week we held a conference in London which concentrated on trade and the financial sector. It was designed to bring together the Israelis, the Palestinians and others from that area and precisely to focus attention on the economic opportunities opening up as a result of the peace process.

Mr. Kaufman: Should not this House offer its congratulations to and express its admiration for Prime Minister Rabin and Chairman Arafat on their courage and foresight in going through with an agreement that was not easy to frame and will not be easy to implement but which it is essential to implement? Is not that a vindication of all those who said, when it was not fashionable, that there

could be no peace in the middle east without negotiations between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation? Will the right hon. Gentleman do all that he can to speed the negotiations with Syria and Jordan, which can bring about a comprehensive peace with open frontiers and form diplomatic relations in the middle east?

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman has it exactly right, both in his analysis of what is taking place today in Cairo and in his advice on the future, which we shall follow.

Mr. Budgen: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, as the most important issue today is our involvement in Bosnia, he should demonstrate that, now that we have abandoned the principle of getting involved only when the British national interest is affected, we are prepared to at least double the size of our forces so that we can intervene wherever there is a humanitarian cause?

Mr. Hurd: I think that I am answering a question about the middle east; we have no intention of doubling our forces in the middle east.

Mr. Ernie Ross: I am sure that the whole House concurs with what the right hon. Gentleman said earlier about the historic nature of the agreement signed today in Cairo. He is aware that three other elements are very important if the agreement is to be the first stage in bringing peace not only to Israel but to the whole of the middle east. There needs to be a comprehensive peace settlement with all the Arab countries, including Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. There also needs to be not only economic progress for the Palestinians in the west bank and Gaza but security for the Palestinians in the interim. The right hon. Gentleman is aware that, as a result of Security Council resolution 904, of which we are co-sponsors, either this week or next there will be a temporary international presence in Hebron as part of the confidence-building measures. Resolution 904 also calls for an extension of the international presence to the rest of the west bank. Has the right hon. Gentleman had any discussions with our European partners with a view to offering that protection throughout the west bank?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is right about the need for security; I welcome the arrangements for Hebron. The British Government are giving substantial help to the Palestinians for the police, with training courses for senior officers and 200 sets of riot control equipment to minimise the use of guns. We have persuaded the European Union to contribute up to 10 million ecu to the police. The policing of the west bank—Gaza and Jericho first, then the rest of the west bank—is crucial.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the great courage and determination shown by both sides are only the beginning of the peace process, and that the more difficult part of implementation still has to be addressed and will need the support of all Governments? Is it not, therefore, an appropriate time for the Government to take a larger step towards the obliteration of the iniquitous Arab trade boycott, which is in contempt of the principle of free trade which the Government hold so dear?

Mr. Hurd: We have urged our Arab friends to lift the boycott. We believe that there was never any justification for it; even on the basis of the justification given by the Arabs, the moment for it has passed. We welcome some steps, notably in the Gulf, to lift the boycott and we hope that they will be continued.

Dr. John Cunningham: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the Labour party expresses emphatic support for the courageous and historic agreement between the Labour Government of Israel and Mr. Arafat and the Palestine Liberation Organisation? Is not it clear that those political leaders have earned widespread respect, and that they deserve continuing support and encouragement in their endeavours to secure a comprehensive settlement?

Can the right hon. Gentleman tell us what practical financial support is being made available to buttress the agreement? What is Britain's contribution, for example, to the package being assembled by the World bank for investment and reconstruction in the west bank and Gaza? As we both agree that British trade with Israel, the west bank and Gaza will be of mutual importance and benefit, can the right hon. Gentleman clarify the position on export credit guarantees for such trade with the Palestinian communities?

Mr. Hurd: I need notice of the right hon. Gentleman's last point; I will write to him. I agree with him about the need for progress on the other tracks and about the need for help for the Palestinians. The World bank has its own resources, of course, but the Government intend to provide £70 million in assistance to the Palestinians in the years 1994-96 both through multilateral, mainly European, and through bilateral channels. I have already given the House details of our specific help to the police. We are providing expert legal help for the drafting of Palestinian laws, Bank of England advice on banking matters and help in preparing for the Palestinian elections.

Inward Investment

6. Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps his Department is taking to encourage inward investment in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Goodlad: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, working very closely with the inward investment bureau of the Department of Trade and Industry, attaches a high priority to securing inward investment in the United Kingdom. We have dedicated inward investment teams at our posts in the United States, Canada, Germany, Switzerland, Japan and South Korea. In all our other markets, there are knowledgeable staff in our posts who can develop and respond to inward investment opportunities. In 1992-93, there were at least 303 inward investment decisions by foreign companies, creating or safeguarding more than 56,000 jobs.

Mr. Bruce: Can my right hon. Friend tell the House how successful Britain has been compared with other nations in attracting inward investment? Will he have a conversation with his colleagues who are on the Front Bench this afternoon and so learn of their experiences when visiting south Dorset? Information about what a wonderful place south Dorset is for inward investment can then be passed on to diplomats throughout the world, to ensure that the success in the rest of the country is duplicated in my area.

Mr. Goodlad: The answer to the first part of my hon. Friend's question is: very successful. One third of all inward investment in the European Union by the end of 1992 was in the United Kingdom. By March 1993, we had attracted 41 per cent. of all Japanese investment in the European Union and by the end of 1992, we had attracted almost 39 per cent. of all United States inward investment in the EU. I congratulate my hon. Friend on his dedication to the cause of inward investment in south Dorset and will ensure that that message is transmitted throughout the world.

Mr. Enright: Would not it be a great disincentive to inward investment if, in the future, when monetary union came about in Europe, Britain rigidly refused to go in? Will the Minister condemn those buffoons who are going around at the moment proclaiming it as a great principle that we should not join a monetary union?

Mr. Goodlad: I am entirely convinced that the conditions that have attracted so many foreign businesses to invest in the country will prevail in future as they have in the past under a Conservative Government.

Sir Anthony Grant: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the whole history of events since the last war has demonstrated that the one great disincentive to invest in Britain is the fear of a Labour Government?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, but we shall disseminate throughout the world the message that there is no such danger.

Ms Quin: As there seems to be a peculiar belief on the Conservative Benches that low wages and poor working conditions attract inward investment, will the Minister explain why Nissan, in its evidence to the Select Committee on Employment, said, first, that the social chapter would be no problem for it because it already exceeded its provisions and, secondly, that it thought that the low-wage, low-skill approach to the economy was the road to economic disaster?

Mr. Goodlad: The evidence given by Nissan is obviously a matter for it, but it is an extremely enthusiastic investor in the United Kingdom and is very welcome. The reason why we are so successful is that we have low inflation, low taxes and good industrial relations. The Labour party would make this a high-cost area and would deter foreign investment. People recognise that, but they also recognise that there is no danger of its being allowed to happen.

Mr. Charles Kennedy: Does the Minister agree that one of the keys to inward investment is the ability of the regions and the nations of the United Kingdom to offer a good base in terms of transport, communications, infrastructure and the like? Is that advantage—or potential advantage—as great as it could be, given that there is misuse of the European Union structural social funding in the sense that it is not being made truly additional to the funds that the Treasury should be making available through the local authorities and other funding bodies? Will the Minister take steps to correct that deficiency so that we can realise the full potential which would otherwise be available to different parts of the country?

Mr. Goodlad: Obviously, a company's final decision as to where to locate is a matter for its commercial judgment. It is one of the objectives of the Invest in Britain Bureau to encourage firms to set up in assisted areas when that is appropriate to the company's needs. Its enormous success in doing so suggests that, for once, the hon. Gentleman is uncharacteristically quite wrong.

Mr. Viggers: My right hon. Friend has already referred to the success of Japanese investment in this country, which accounts for more than 40 per cent. of all Japanese investment in Europe. Does he agree that to underpin, complement and promote still further that Japanese investment, it is entirely appropriate that there should be a much wider educational and cultural inter-relationship between the United Kingdom and Japan?

Mr. Goodlad: Yes. My hon. Friend is on to quite an important point. He will be aware, because he makes a considerable personal contribution to this process, that the Government are seeking to fulfil the objectives that he sets out.

Yugoslavia

7. Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the situation in the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Hurd: The situation throughout Bosnia remains tense. The immediate priority is to secure a ceasefire as a prelude to a negotiated settlement. The new contact group, which was formed in London a week ago, brings together the negotiating efforts of the European Union, the United Nations, the United States and Russia and it is exploring on the ground prospects for a negotiated settlement with the parties.

Mr. Macdonald: Does the Foreign Secretary accept that every declaration on Bosnia to which either he or the Prime Minister have put their names—from the London conference to the Edinburgh summit and even the Washington agreement—has affirmed, as a matter of principle, the recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina within its internationally recognised borders and also the absolute right of refugees to return to the areas from which they have been cleansed?

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm the Government's attachment to those principles and explain how that squares with the reported comments of the Minister of State in Sarajevo yesterday that there would have to be some land given up by the Bosnian Government and some readjustment of borders? Does he accept that any attempt made by the Government to go back on those declarations would be a cynical betrayal of their previous words and would fatally undermine their ability to adjudicate in the crisis and in future border disagreements?

Mr. Hurd: We are talking about boundaries inside Bosnia-Herzogovina—what the boundaries should be between areas occupied by Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Moslems. There has been some progress on that through the months, but the matter is not yet finalised. It will have to be negotiated—it cannot be imposed.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the attacks against French aircraft and the shooting down of a Royal Navy Sea Harrier are acts of aggression against NATO? Consequently, there is no excuse now for the Germans, for example, not to send troops, and the United

States should not be standing on the sidelines. Without the presence of those two nations on the ground, NATO's position is weakened. The bargaining position is weakened, and goodness knows what their absence does to NATO's conventional deterrent capability.

Mr. Hurd: The Germans have a legal problem as a result of their constitution. They have a historical problem because of the history of the second world war. The President of the United States has made it clear that the United States would be willing, if Congress agreed, to put in troops on the ground in Bosnia once there was a general settlement which needed to be implemented. That is what we are working on.

Mr. Soley: As the Government seem to accept that when the threat of force was made clear and credible in both Sarajevo and Gorazde it seemed to work, will the right hon. Gentleman tell us why he thinks that it would not have worked 18 months ago?

Mr. Hurd: I do not believe that 18 months ago the circumstances existed in which it would have worked. We cannot be certain of these things, but that was certainly the advice that we received at the time and the advice on which we and many others acted. The threat and the use of air power can be useful for certain specific objectives—the self-defence of United Nations units and in certain instances the protection of safe areas. That has been shown, but I do not believe—and I do not think that the majority of right hon. and hon. Members believe—that air power can in Bosnia, any more than in Iraq or Vietnam, bring a war to an end.

Argentina

8. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made towards normalising relations with Argentina.

Mr. Hurd: We continue to make good progress in many fields. For example, in trade, British exports grew by 50 per cent. in 1993, and there are good investment opportunities. We continue to disagree about sovereignty over the Falkland Islands, but we have an agreement on fisheries conservation and we expect to meet the Argentines in July to discuss oil. We also co-operate internationally: for example, British and Argentine troops are working side by side in UN peacekeeping operations in the former Yugoslavia and in Cyprus.

Mr. Knapman: Does my right hon. Friend accept that historically Great Britain and Argentina have been firm friends and substantial trading partners? I am glad to hear that my right hon. Friend is doing all that he can to encourage that relationship, but what effect is the continuing claim by the Argentines to sovereignty over the Falkland Islands having on that relationship?

Mr. Hurd: The relationship would certainly be much more straightforward and the prospects of co-operation between the islands and the mainland much clearer if the Argentines felt able to withdraw their claim.

Mr. Dalyell: When the Foreign Secretary came to the Latin American group yesterday he referred to the fragile fish breeding stocks. Is it likely that some agreement will be reached with Argentina on that important subject?

Mr. Hurd: There is a temporary agreement, but it has worked reasonably well. It limits the number of licences that both sides—the Argentines and the islands—offer to fishing fleets, mainly from the far east, catching the illex squid. I should like to convert that into a longer-standing agreement so that fisheries authorities in Argentina and the islands will be assured of proper conservation and a reasonable future for the revenue that comes from fish.

Holidaymakers

9. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice he has for Britons holidaying abroad this summer.

Mr. Goodlad: The most important messages are: obtain travel insurance, do not get involved with drugs, and respect and observe local customs. Anyone who needs advice about particular destinations should contact the Foreign Office travel advice unit on 071-270 4129.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my right hon. Friend take steps to publicise that useful helpline service more widely so that travellers know in advance of the help available to them if they run into any of those problems?

Mr. Goodlad: Travel advice notices are disseminated swiftly through the travel industry—and thus to a large part of the public—by electronic information systems. Notices may be read on the BBC's Ceefax service. Our aim is to give prompt and accurate advice on the safety of British nationals abroad and we respond promptly to inquiries from the public on the number that I have given.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Minister advise holidaymakers, wherever they are and whoever they are, to tell their hosts that we in Workington have an empty 500,000 sq ft factory and want a tenant or owner from overseas to put in some substantial industrial plant? We need the business and we are open to offers.

Mr. Goodlad: I am sure that travellers everywhere will hear the hon. Gentleman's message; perhaps he would like to publicise his own telephone number.

South Africa

10. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will arrange to meet South African political leaders to discuss the outcome of the elections.

11. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures Her Majesty's Government are taking to assist the new Government of South Africa to consolidate democracy in that country.

12. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to make an official visit to South Africa to discuss the outcome of the recent elections there.

Mr. Hurd: I am sure that the House will join me in warmly congratulating the South African people on their remarkable achievement. They have set the world an example of peaceful democratic change. We congratulate Mr. Mandela on his victory and look forward with confidence to working with him and his colleagues in Government.

Britain expects to provide more than £100 million of help to South Africa over the next three years. That includes £60 million of bilateral aid, plus investments by the Commonwealth Development Corporation and our share of European Community assistance. That is a sizeable amount—almost double the £35 million that we have given in the past three years. The emphasis will be on quality, concentrating our help in crucial areas and focusing on technical assistance. We have also been training about 1,000 South Africans a year. We shall discuss priorities for our aid programme with the new Government, including help to reduce poverty and to improve education and health care, and we stand ready to help with restructuring and training the police and the public service. On the military side, we have already been asked to help with integrating a new national defence force. The Ministry of Defence has had detailed discussions in South Africa and has come back with some worked-up proposals.

Britain is also playing a leading role in working out a package of European Union measures to define the future trading relationship between the Union and South Africa, technical assistance and political dialogue.

Mr. Canavan: I join the Secretary of State in congratulating the African National Congress and, particularly, Nelson Mandela, whom I wish well in his efforts to form a Government of national unity to unite all the people of South Africa, whatever their colour or ethnic origin. Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that his statement is an offer of maximum assistance to enable the new South African Government, the new democracy and its economy to flourish and for South Africa to be fully welcomed into the international community, including membership of the Commonwealth if that is its wish?

Mr. Hurd: I have given the details. It is a strong and very practical British interest that the new South Africa should succeed. I am sure that if South Africa decides to re-enter the Commonwealth it will be welcomed back with warm enthusiasm.

Mr. Bennett: I echo the congratulations that have been expressed, but does the Foreign Secretary accept that too often celebrations turn to tears? Will he ensure that some of the money in the aid package to which he referred is spent on ensuring that the poorest people in South Africa see a rapid improvement in the appalling conditions in which they have to live so as to make it clear to them that exercising the vote has produced worthwhile improvements to their lives?

Mr. Hurd: We have to focus our aid, which is limited in its total, on those areas in which we think that British help can be most effective. The problem that the hon. Gentleman raises cannot be solved from outside. It will depend on policies pursued inside South Africa and it is crucially important, as the hon. Gentleman would agree, that the new Government of national unity should follow policies that encourage growth and outside investment.

Sir Michael Neubert: Once the understandable electoral exuberance has faded and economic expectations come more sharply into focus, will it not be increasingly relevant to remember that half South Africa's foreign investment is British and that Britain is one of South Africa's major trading partners? Does my right hon. Friend have any specific plans to strengthen Britain's commercial and industrial role in bringing greater prosperity to the newly enfranchised South African people?

Mr. Hurd: It is very important that British business, with the interests in South Africa that my hon. Friend mentions, should follow carefully the opportunities and prospects that are now opening up. They are different and there will certainly be difficulties. The road ahead is bound to include a good many rocks. However, if British business follows the developments with the care that those developments deserve, I hope and believe that the future for British interests and British investment in South Africa will be bright.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Having had the privilege of witnessing at first hand the election that took place last week, may I ask the Foreign Secretary to agree that it was a most massive and convincing approval of democracy? Given the immense tasks of reconstruction to end the legacies of apartheid, will the Foreign Secretary guarantee that he will not simply regard South Africa as yesterday's problem but will realise that it is an issue in which he must keep an overriding interest in the future?

Mr. Hurd: I hope that what I have said today already shows that. Of course the election difficulties were very great and they have not all been overcome, as the news today shows. Nevertheless, it has been a remarkable feat. I am grateful—and the House should be grateful—to hon. Members on both sides of the House who took part and helped to ensure that.

Sir Michael Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend accept that those who have been in touch with political leaders in South Africa in recent weeks are aware of their keen interest in having support for the maintenance of their new democracy in practical terms in respect of assistance to political parties and for the new Parliament itself? While the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association will wish to play a full part in that, will my right hon. Friend assure us that the Government will consider practical ways to carry forward that programme?

Mr. Hurd: Indeed, and we shall look to the Westminster Foundation, which is already active in South Africa, to take up—and, where it thinks it justified, to finance—projects to help advance democracy based on parties.

Dr. John Cunningham: The Opposition join the Foreign Secretary in expressing our great joy at the ending of the dreadful tyranny of apartheid, and we send our warmest congratulations to our friends in the African National Congress, Mr. Nelson Mandela, Mr. Thabo Mbeki, Mr. Mendi Msimang and many others. Should we not also record our respect for the role played by Mr. de Klerk in the historic victory for democracy in South Africa? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept, however, that this is simply the starting point in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the social and economic fabric of a great country? Not only do we owe a great historic debt to that country, but we have significant economic links with it.

For all those reasons, will the right hon. Gentleman work in the European Union, the United Nations and the

Commonwealth, and with the Treasury within the British Government, to seek significantly to increase the package of support to which he has referred today?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that this is the end of one chapter—the chapter of apartheid—and the starting point of a new one. It begins with great hope, but it will certainly include many difficulties, as everyone agrees. Those difficulties must be solved by South Africans within South Africa, but the world outside can help—through investment, through the sort of technical assistance that I have summarised today, and through trade. That is why we and the Germans have paid particular attention in recent months to the new trading arrangements that South Africa will need with the European Union.

Italy

13. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement of his policy on relations with the new Government in Italy.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The new Italian Government are not yet in place. When they are, we shall look forward to working closely with our new Italian colleagues.

Mrs. Knight: Does my hon. Friend consider that the new Italian Government are likely to share the attitude of our Government in their approach to the European Union, especially our opposition to the creation of a socialist super-state?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We do not yet know the attitudes and policies of the new Government, but I expect them to bring some fresh thinking to the issues facing the European Union. We hope to work closely with them to promote British interests, particularly in budgetary discipline, subsidiarity and the promotion of free markets and free trade. We also hope to agree on keeping the European Union outward looking and diverse, respecting the nation state and preventing the creation of a socialist super-state. There is a great deal of evidence that the new Italian Government and the constituent parties in the future coalition share many of our attitudes. We look forward to maintaining a close working relationship with the future Italian Government, as we did with the last.

Mr. Winnick: Given that it is 50 years since the liberation of Italy from fascism, is it not a matter for concern that some of the people involved in the new Government have highly praised the notorious war criminal and mass murderer, Mussolini, and that the Speaker of the Italian Parliament has made similar remarks? Is it too much to ask the Conservative Government here to make it absolutely clear that we consider Mussolini a notorious mass murderer and that we hold in contempt all in Italy who consider him some sort of hero?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Signor Mussolini is not participating in the new Italian Government. If any supporters of his were to do so, we should naturally take that into account in our relations with them. It is for the Italians to decide who governs them. If the new Ministers are properly elected and appointed by the Italian people, we shall look forward to working with them.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Have not the Italian people given a clear message in their recent elections as to what they think about Euro-elitists and Euro-centralisers?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Italians have been through something of a democratic revolution in recent months. We respect their choice in electing the parties that they have elected. Judging by the programme on which those parties have been elected, we believe that there are fruitful areas for co-operation between the British Government and the future Italian Government.

Madam Speaker: I called Sir Thomas Arnold, but Mr. Jacques Arnold thought that I had called him. I now call Sir Thomas Arnold.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Israel

14. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with Israel.

Mr. Hurd: We enjoy excellent bilateral relations with Israel.

Sir Thomas Arnold: Will my right hon. Friend consider lifting the arms embargo, and can he confirm that the British Government are now willing to accept tenders from the Israeli armaments industry?

Mr. Hurd: We are certainly willing to do the second and, as my hon. Friend probably knows, there have been discussions on particular projects. As regards the first point, the arms embargo was imposed because of Israeli action in Lebanon and we would be prepared to review the arms embargo in the light of progress on the Lebanese track of the peace process.

Mr. Janner: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, following my extraordinary and refreshing visits to Saudi Arabia and Oman last week, I was privileged yesterday to attend the multilateral discussions in Qatar about middle east disarmament? Will the right hon. Gentleman join me in congratulating Qatar on its courage in holding the discussions there, Israel and the other participants on taking part and the Saudis on at last taking a thoroughly active and, one hopes, soon constructive part in the proceedings? Will the Foreign Secretary ask the Syrians now to join as without them there is little hope of the proceedings achieving the results that we all want?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. and learned Gentleman is a notable pilgrim to places of interest at times of interest and, whether by coincidence or as a consequence, things do on the whole seem to be moving in the right direction. I do not know whether he has yet booked his passage to Damascus.

Falkland Islands

15. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his recent visit to the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Hurd: My visit to the Falkland Islands was the first by a Foreign Secretary. It is a heart-warming place. The islanders are proud of their way of life and much attached to it and to Britain. They have made great strides since 1982. Their population has increased, the fisheries revenue

has brought new prosperity and they are confident about the future. I was able to reassure the islanders that, while we seek improved relations with Argentina, their sovereignty is not for discussion and we shall continue to support their right to self-determination.

Mr. Sheerby: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that he has discussed developments in the Falkland Islands continental shelf with legislative councillors, particularly the plans for a licence round for oil exploration and exploitation starting this year and coming to a conclusion in 1995? Will he confirm that those plans will go ahead as quickly as possible?

Mr. Hurd: That was something which I discussed in general terms with the councillors in Port Stanley and, as I said in answer to an earlier question, we expect to have discussions with the Argentines about oil before long. The islanders, I found, were interested in exploiting and benefiting from the oil if—it is still a big if—it is found to exist in marketable conditions. We have not excluded co-operation with Argentine interests in this, but it is clear from our general policy that any arrangements of that kind must not prejudice our sovereignty over the islands.

Mr. Foulkes: As the present and previous Argentine Governments have made it absolutely clear that they pose no military threat whatever to the Falkland Islands, and as the Foreign Secretary said earlier that Argentine and British soldiers are fighting side by side in UN peacekeeping forces, why is it necessary to continue an arms embargo on Argentina?

Mr. Hurd: I welcome very much what the Argentine Government said about the use of force, but one cannot peer with any great certainty into the future for ever. As I said in answer to an earlier question, it would be a great simplification of all the matters if Argentina were to drop its claim to the islands.

Middle East Peace Talks

16. **Mr. Bendall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has for a forthcoming visit to the middle east to discuss the peace process.

Mr. Hurd: I have no such plans at present.

Mr. Bendall: In view of the remarks that my right hon. Friend made about a review of the Israeli arms embargo, may I ask him what time scale would possibly be in mind? Clearly, to take off the embargo, which the other European countries would also do, would help British exports and British jobs.

Mr. Hurd: As I said earlier, the timing will depend on progress down the Lebanese track of the process because that was the reason for the measure in the first place.

Mr. Gunnell: Does the Foreign Secretary agree that the agreement that we have welcomed today is really the beginning of a peace process in the sense that it represents the first fruits of the discussions? Will he make it clear that we expect that those discussions will go forward and bring other rewards and, indeed, that the behaviour of people in the territories that have self-rule will to some extent depend on whether there is movement forward? Will the Foreign Secretary spell out the things he hopes that the peace talks will achieve next?

Mr. Hurd: There are three remaining tracks. There is the Syrian track, on which the American Secretary of State is seeking to make progress now, and I warmly support what he is doing between Tel Aviv and Damascus. There is the Jordanian track, in which there is a problem of frontiers and other practical matters, and we are in close touch with the King and the Israelis about that. Then there is the Lebanese track. Progress is needed on all of them.

Mr. Batiste: What impression has my right hon. Friend formed of the intentions of the Syrian Government with regard to reaching a peace treaty with Israel, and in relation to Lebanon?

Mr. Hurd: The Syrians say that they want total Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights. The Israelis say that they want total peace with Syria. The discussions turn on how one defines and, indeed, how one times total withdrawal and total peace. That is what the American Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, is trying to elucidate.

Cyprus

19. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the situation in Cyprus.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The United Nations Secretary-General's special representative on Cyprus, Mr. Joe Clark, held talks in Cyprus last week. He was attempting to secure agreement on the implementation of a package of confidence-building measures which we actively support. President Clerides agreed to the UN implementation plan some time ago, but Mr. Denktash continues to have objections to it. The Secretary-General will shortly submit a report on the talks to the Security Council.

Mrs. Roche: Does the Minister agree that it is about time that the British Government took a very tough stance indeed with the illegal regime of Mr. Denktash, who is clearly blocking any possibility of settlement in relation to Cyprus? Would it not help if the British Government would more actively back Cyprus's application for membership of the European Union?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have been playing an active role in trying to get the confidence-building measures accepted by both sides. That cannot be done by force. It has to be done by persuasion and diplomatic effort. We regret that Mr. Denktash has, at least for the present, refused to take forward the measures. The Security Council will be considering what future measures to take in due course.

Sir Jim Spicer: Will my hon. Friend at the same time remind Opposition Members that, had it not been for the duplicity, stupidity and—

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Incompetence.

Sir Jim Spicer: —incompetence, thank you—of the Labour Government in 1974, we would not be in the situation that we are now in?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I understand the emotions that lie beneath my hon. Friend's question, but we must try to live less in the past and look more to the future. That is why we are doing all that we can to bring about a reconciliation between the two parts of that divided island.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Does the Minister agree that originally both the Turkish Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots accepted in principle the confidence-building measures proposed by the United Nations, and that the collapse of the talks last week was a result of a new map being submitted by the United Nations at the request of the Greek Cypriots which contradicted the original one presented on the table?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There have been some changes in the original confidence-building measures plan, but they would still have benefited both communities. I think it is clear to impartial observers that it is Mr. Denktash who has not shown the political will on this occasion.

Eastern Europe

20. **Mr. Duncan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether eastern European countries can be expected to join the EC.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Copenhagen European Council in June 1993 agreed that the associate countries of central and eastern Europe that so wished could join the European Union as soon as they were able to assume the obligations of membership by satisfying the economic and political conditions required. We are fully committed to that objective.

Mr. Duncan: Does my hon. Friend agree that, having pressed those countries to shake off the shackles of communism, it would be negligent if we were then to deny them the benefits of free trade? Does he agree with me that free trade and democracy are not only the guarantees of peace but the best means by which those countries can qualify for membership of the Community in the future?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Yes, I think that we have a duty to try to help stabilise the democracies in those newly liberated countries. One of the best ways of doing that is to trade with them—in other words, not just to encourage them to promote market economies but to provide a market for the goods that they produce. This country is at the forefront of those member states that are calling for exactly such access.

Trade Descriptions (Amendment)

3.31 pm

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 to harmonise liabilities for misdescription of services and of goods; to impose strict liability for misdescription of services; and for connected purposes.

The Trade Descriptions Act 1968 forms one of the cornerstones of the United Kingdom consumer protection legislation and, by and large, the Act has been successful in promoting higher standards of truthfulness in describing goods and services. However, it has long been recognised that an anomaly—some would say a loophole—lies at the centre of the 1968 Act. Whereas section 1 of the Act creates an offence of strict liability in the case of misdescription of goods, a lesser form of liability attaches to the misdescription of services by virtue of section 14 of the Act. The simple purpose of my Bill is to bring section 14 into line with section 1.

In any case relating to false description of services, the prosecution needs to prove that the person making the false statement knew that it was false or made the statement recklessly—in other words, there is a requirement of mens rea which is absent in the case of false description of goods. This extra requirement contained in section 14 has made it extremely difficult for trading standards officers to bring successful prosecutions in these cases.

The figures from the Office of Fair Trading confirm the scale of the problem. In 1992, there were 1,441 prosecutions for false descriptions of goods, but in that same year there were only 171 prosecutions relating to false statements about services. The discrepancy in the figures cannot be justified or rationalised by the argument that there were fewer false descriptions relating to services. I think that the experience of most hon. Members in the House is directly contrary to that.

In recent memory, there was the fiasco over the Hoover air flight tickets promotion, and all our constituents experience continuing problems with false statements made in holiday brochures. Many people also experience difficulties in getting their motor vehicles repaired in garages. Those examples confirm that there is a genuine problem that the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 is presently failing to address.

I do not believe that the distinction in the Act between liability for false descriptions of goods and false descriptions of services can be justified any longer. In many individual cases, the distinction between goods and services is not always clear—as in the provision of meals in restaurants, for example. In numerous circumstances, the provision of goods and services always goes together, as in the case of car repairs where replacement parts are supplied as part of a garage's service. In such cases, the distinction between the treatment of goods and of services has little common sense from the consumer perspective.

In addition, all the major consumer organisations, including the Consumers Association, the National Consumer Council and the Institute of Trading Standards Administration, support the case for reform of the Trade Descriptions Act. Indeed, that support for reforming the 1968 Act goes beyond the scope of the consumer protection organisations. The Department of Trade and Industry, back in 1990, in a consultation document on reforms to the Trade Descriptions Act, commented:

"there would seem to be a"
logical
"case for this"

reform, meaning the harmonisation of liability. Four years after that consultation paper was published, we still await the DTI's conclusions on what reforms are appropriate to the Trade Descriptions Act. The Act was reviewed in the Methven report in 1976, which recommended that strict liability should apply to offences relating to the supply of services.

There is a further case for the reform that I propose. The developing case law under section 14 has highlighted a specific problem with that section of the Act. I think specifically of the decision of the House of Lords in 1984 in the case of WINGS Ltd. *v.* Ellis. That case has confused the issue of when liability can arise under section 14, creating the possibility that already strict liability might pertain. The purpose of my Bill is to clarify liability under section 14 once and for all.

My Bill will not, however, impose impossible burdens on traders. It will simply require them to be honest.

It should also be remembered that a general defence under section 24 of the Trade Descriptions Act is always available to a defendant, and the section 24 defence allows a trader to argue in the court that he made a genuine mistake of fact and took reasonable steps to avoid the commission of any offence under the Act. In other words, there is a guarantee—a safeguard—in the Act to protect the genuinely innocent trader.

My Bill would enhance consumer rights and ensure fairer competition between businesses. There should be no place in the market for cowboys and conmen. My Bill proposes a modest but important change to the 1968 Act. That change is long overdue.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. John Hutton, Ms Diane Abbott, Mr. Robert Ainsworth, Mrs. Barbara Roche, Mr. Kevin Hughes, Mr. Geoffrey Hoon, Mr. Alan Milburn, Ms Janet Anderson and Mr. Peter Mandelson.

TRADE DESCRIPTIONS (AMENDMENT)

Mr. John Hutton accordingly presented a Bill to amend the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 to harmonise liabilities for misdescription of services and of goods; to impose strict liability for misdescription of services; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 20 May, and to be printed. [Bill 104.]

The Army

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

3.38 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): At a time when pictures of Army personnel are seldom out of the papers or off the television screens, I very much welcome the opportunity to debate their role. I do not need to remind the House that the Army continues to be heavily engaged in operations throughout the world. I am sure that all hon. Members will wish to join me in paying tribute to the quiet professionalism of Army personnel in the many difficult environments in which they find themselves.

I have no doubt that there will be references during the debate to the defence costs study, especially following recent media speculation. My hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement intends to report in his closing speech on the progress of the defence costs study, but it may help if I remind the House now that it is not aimed at reducing our military capability or our commitments. Its real aim is encapsulated in the alternative title of "Front Line First".

As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State explained when he announced the study at the beginning of December, we were confident that a radical review of our support and management arrangements could produce the required savings without reducing our military capabilities or effectiveness. The defence costs study was intended to confirm that and to develop specific proposals, and I believe that it is now in sight of both objectives. That is a tremendous achievement by all concerned. But I remind the House that any further comment about individual items would be pure speculation, as no ministerial decisions have yet been taken. A full report will be made to the House by the Secretary of State in July.

The operations of the British Army in Bosnia and in Northern Ireland are often conducted in the glare of media interest. Many other operational deployments, often involving hardship and danger, take place unnoticed and unsung. I should like to give three examples.

In July last year, major flooding in Nepal killed more than 1,000 people and destroyed many roads and bridges. Katmandu was almost completely cut off from the outside world— the source of all its food and fuel. In response to a request from the Nepalese Government, we deployed a squadron of Queen's Gurkha engineers, who erected three major bridges and successfully reopened communication links.

Also last year, British elements of the United Nations force in Cambodia were caught up in a number of serious incidents orchestrated by the Khmer Rouge in the run-up to the successful elections. Actions by British Army personnel were recognised in the recent gallantry awards.

Since September 1991, we have had a small military team in northern Iraq as part of a coalition presence in the security zone created to enable Kurdish refugees to return to their homes in the mountains. The two officers who died in the tragic accident on 14 April were our contribution to that coalition effort. They were performing a most valuable task, and I wish to record that the Government do not underestimate how much we rely on the skills, resilience and versatility of our service personnel in these and similar tasks. I wish also to convey my condolences publicly to the families of the two officers so tragically and publicly struck down in the course of their duties far afield.

The Army has also been engaged in the important task of providing aid to the civil community here at home. As hon. Members will remember, the Army came to the rescue of people affected by the floods in the south of England last winter. Thousands of sandbags were filled by troops from various units to reinforce flood defences. In addition, in October the Household Cavalry Regiment gave shelter to families in the Windsor area. In January, following the extensive flooding around Chichester, 36 Engineer Regiment was asked by West Sussex county council to restore road communications, which it did by building Bailey bridges at West Hampnett and Merston and leaving them in place for several weeks. Members of the Territorial Army, from 127 Field Squadron Royal Engineers (Volunteers) at Brighton, gave valuable assistance to their Regular colleagues in this operation.

Mr. Winston Churchill (Davyhulme): I should like to join in the tribute that my hon. Friend has paid to our armed forces worldwide for the excellent job that they are doing and, specifically, to the families of the men who recently lost their lives in northern Iraq and in Bosnia.

With regard to the deaths of the young officers in the unfortunate incident over northern Iraq, may I ask my hon. Friend whether the Government will look once again at the levels of compensation payable in such cases of bereavement? It would be a scandal of enormous proportions if the families of officers in the prime of their earning capacity who have been struck down in the line of duty were to get a penny less than an Army major who chooses to become pregnant.

Mr. Hanley: My hon. Friend speaks for many people. This is a most difficult issue. Other hon. Members may raise the subject, but I can assure my hon. Friend that the sad incident in Iraq is being investigated very carefully. A British officer and a British Treasury solicitor are involved in the investigation, and all aspects will be very carefully considered by the Ministry of Defence.

Having dealt with some smaller issues— smaller but, none the less, important to hon. Members on both sides — with regard to the Army's role during the last few months, I should like to refer to some more weighty matters, such as the events in the former Yugoslavia.

When we last debated Army matters, the first British battalion group to deploy to Bosnia, the Cheshire Regiment, was just four months into its tour. It was relieved last May by the Prince of Wales Own Regiment and a squadron of Light Dragoons from Germany. A third roulement took place last November when the 1st Battalion of the Coldstream Guards and another squadron of Light Dragoons took up the mantle. In March this year, we deployed a second battalion group, the 1st Battalion of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment, and a further Light Dragoon squadron in response to General Rose's request for additional troops to monitor the Sarajevo and Muslim-Croat ceasefires.

The whole House will wish to join me in paying tribute to those who have served and those who are serving in that theatre of operations. Although today we are focusing on the Army's contribution, let us not forget the important role of the other services in, for example, the humanitarian airlift to Sarajevo, the provision of close air support and the

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naval operations in the Adriatic. Invaluable assistance has also been provided by reservists from all three services, mainly with linguistic and public information skills, who have been called out for service. On 1 April, the Territorial Army element comprised 27 personnel serving in the UK as part of the defence debriefing team, and one officer based in Split, Croatia.

The UK contribution to current UN operations in former Yugoslavia is second to none in terms of its professionalism, efficiency and effectiveness. Our two battalion groups on the ground, with their supporting units, comprise some 3,300 personnel. Only the French contingent is larger. The composition of the two battalion groups and their support reflects the many different capabilities and skills which their formidable task and its logistic back-up demand.

The Royal Engineers have played an essential role in opening and maintaining vital supply routes, both for humanitarian aid and support of UNPROFOR as a whole, in mountainous and muddy terrain in severe weather. Other specialist troops, for example in transport and communications, are involved, and those troops at the logistics base in Split are vital to the success of the whole operation.

Inevitably, however, the two battalion groups in central Bosnia have tended to capture media interest. Since the first deployment in the autumn of 1992, BRITBAT 1, as it is now called, equipped with Warrior and Scimitar armoured fighting vehicles, has been escorting humanitarian convoys taking supplies from United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees warehouses to destinations throughout central and north-east Bosnia. In that primary role, the British contingent has assisted with the delivery of over 120,000 tonnes of aid. That is a remarkable achievement in difficult and often dangerous conditions in the face of obstructions and, at times, outright hostility from all three parties.

Our troops have shown tremendous courage under fire, determination, tact in negotiating access for humanitarian aid, and the sheer will to get the job done and done efficiently, which is the hallmark of the British Army. The contribution of the UK contingent is warmly appreciated by the UN and fellow troop contributors alike. Hundreds of thousands owe their lives to the supplies provided by the UN's humanitarian operation, and British service personnel can feel justifiably proud of the part that they are playing in it.

Success, however, has a price. Following the sad death of Lance Corporal Edwards in January 1993, this year has seen four further British fatalities in Bosnia. On 19 March, Corporal Barney Warburton of the Royal Engineers was killed while preparing to destroy a mine handed in at a UN checkpoint. On 15 April, Corporal Fergus Rennie, who was serving as a joint commission officer, was killed as a result of Bosnian-Serb fire at Gorazde. The following day, Marine Timothy Coates, who was serving on attachment to the UNHCR in Sarajevo, was shot dead by personnel manning a Bosnian Government checkpoint in the city. On Friday 29 April, Captain Stephen Wormald of the 2nd Royal Anglian was killed and two other British Army personnel were injured when the Land-Rover in which they were travelling struck an anti-tank mine.

I am sure that the House will join me in expressing deep condolences to the families of those five brave men tragically killed while attempting to relieve the suffering of the ordinary people caught up in that dreadful, senseless conflict.

The recent Sarajevo and Muslim-Croat ceasefires in Bosnia have added to the roles and responsibilities of British troops. In addition to their primary role of escorting humanitarian aid convoys, they have been extensively involved in monitoring the ceasefires, patrolling buffer zones and confrontation lines, manning observation and check points, weapons collection points and liaising between the warring factions. I pay particular tribute to Lieutenant General Sir Michael Rose who has made such an impressive and successful contribution to the developments and in many other areas since his appointment as UN Commander, Bosnia-Herzegovina Command. He is a real model of a modern general.

The House will not expect me to predict how long the tragic situation in the former Yugoslavia will continue. Earlier this year, the ceasefires that I have mentioned resulted in the return to a semblance of normality of life in Sarajevo and generated a mood of optimism that a Bosnia-wide ceasefire would be achieved. All three parties seemed sufficiently war-weary to negotiate seriously towards an overall settlement. The events at Gorazde in recent weeks have been a setback to those hopes.

However, the NATO ultimatum to the Bosnian Serbs has led to an end to their attack on the safe area and a withdrawal of their heavy weapons from the exclusion zone. Let us hope that that will set us back on the right road which, with the establishment of new arrangements to draw together the efforts of the European Union, the United States and the Russians on the peace negotiation front, will lead to a lasting peace settlement in the region.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): I thank my hon. Friend for giving way at that important juncture. Bearing in mind that a considerable movement of Serb men and equipment is advancing on Brcko, what plans, if any, do Her Majesty's Government have for our own troops in that area under the control of the United Nations?

Mr. Hanley: My hon. Friend is right to say that there are movements of troops throughout the theatre in Bosnia. We keep a daily watch over their safety, because the safety of our troops is paramount. They are being deployed by UNPROFOR, which keeps in touch with us if there is a requirement for any major diversion of our troops. Therefore, the answer is that we are keeping an eye on the situation daily.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): We in the Labour party completely associate ourselves with the Minister's statement about the bravery and professionalism of our soldiers whom I visited last week. We also associate ourselves completely with the Minister's commiserations to the bereaved families of the soldiers who have died.

As the Minister said, in bringing some form of peace to central Bosnia under which 1.5 million people now live a life of some normality, the British Army's role there has changed from escorting humanitarian convoys to patrolling the battle zone. That means that a new risk faces the British soldier in the form of land mines. I know, having spoken to our commanders and General Rose out there, that probably tens of thousands of land mines pose a threat to our soldiers. What is the Government's approach to that and what role do they see the British Army playing in the

defusing of those land mines? For example, is it the view of the Army—[HON. MEMBERS: "Come on."] This is important because it affects the lives of British soldiers.

What is the Government's line on those land mines? Are our soldiers expected to defuse the land mines to try to ensure that civilian communication lines are kept open? I ask that out of helpfulness. I simply want to know the position, as does the Army.

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Gentleman is right to raise that important issue. Before I answer, I welcome him back from his recent visit to Bosnia. I am pleased that he is showing no long-term harm from the injury that he suffered while he was there. Obviously, the matter that he raised is of grave importance to our troops. Land mines pose a great danger. We have already heard of the death of one of our contingent while he was trying to defuse a land mine.

We are acting there for the benefit of the United Nations in trying to help the people to receive aid. Obviously, the decision whether it is safe to defuse an item has to be taken on the ground. We keep the matter carefully under consideration, but ultimately it is for commanders on the ground to decide whether it is safe for an item to be dealt with. I assure the hon. Gentleman that, because of his recent experience, about which he has told the House, I shall consider most carefully the point that he has raised.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): May I raise another matter? It may not be of such immediate importance as the other two that have been raised, but I suspect that it concerns hon. Members on both sides of the House.

I refer to the way in which our forces, acting on behalf of the United Nations, are remunerated while serving in the former Yugoslavia. There is some unrest because soldiers from other countries serving under the same UN mandate are remunerated rather more generously than British forces. I appreciate that that is a complicated matter, but if there are to be further such operations the question of how British forces are remunerated while doing the same job as other soldiers in the same theatre is likely to become more acute.

Can the Minister comment on the Government's attitude towards those matters and say whether any long-term thinking is taking place on the problem?

Mr. Hanley: Some individuals in the House—I do not accuse the hon. and learned Gentleman of being one of them—have tried to exploit the subject of our soldiers' pay in Bosnia for political purposes. They have tried to undermine the morale of our forces for their own political ends. I am sure that the House knows about the way in which we pay our soldiers: we give them what is called the X-factor—a sum to take into account what another nation might call danger pay—on a regular basis throughout their careers. In other words, when they go to a place such as Bosnia they are not paid extra for the additional dangers; they have accepted the bargain of being paid the same amount even when they are back in barracks in England —and that is higher than the basic pay of soldiers from other nations.

If one were to compare the pay of one of our soldiers with that of a French soldier of equivalent rank and ability, one would find that the French soldier would be paid much less when not in Bosnia, but more, because of the element of danger, when he was in Bosnia. I believe that so long as we ensure that our soldiers are not overstretched in terms of deployments to such theatres, most of the armed forces will regard what they receive as a fair bargain, and as fair recompense for the services that they perform in the interests of the nation. Of course, a review of pay and allowances will be carried out during the coming year and no doubt such matters will be considered then.

In the meantime, I make it clear to the House that our soldiers are paid well. Those based in Germany receive an element of local overseas allowance, too, while they are in Bosnia, even though they may not be incurring some of the expenses that they would incur were they in Germany. We do not receive complaints from soldiers on the ground about the level of their pay, because they understand the issues. The complaints come from Members of Parliament who try to exploit the position.

I was coming to the end of my comments about Bosnia, and I was saying that we hope that the European Union, the United States and the Russians will continue the negotiations and that they will lead to a lasting peace. That would be the best way for our troops to return home. In the meantime, the British contribution to the United Nations operations will continue. The fourth roulement of BRITBAT 1 is taking place this month, with the second battalion of the Royal Anglian Regiment replacing the Coldstream Guards. I have no doubt that they will uphold the outstanding example set by all their predecessors, and I am sure that the House will join me in wishing them well.

Mr. Churchill: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hanley: I shall allow another intervention, but I have a great deal more to say.

Mr. Churchill: Before my hon. Friend leaves the subject of Bosnia, may I ask him a question? He rightly said that the safety of British forces there is paramount. Will he say what steps are being taken to provide our combat pilots and Hercules crews with missile approach warning systems, which are standard in many of the air forces of the world? Those would provide them, for instance, with full protection against a SAM 7, which is probably what caused the downing of the Sea Harrier the other day.

Mr. Hanley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) for raising the issue. I shall not answer him today because he wrote a detailed letter to the Secretary of State, which my right hon. and learned Friend received only yesterday. My hon. Friend will receive a full reply, of course, as soon as possible. The issue is important and we have it on our agenda for answer.

It is one of the many privileges of my present appointment that I have been able to maintain my connection with Northern Ireland, and to improve my knowledge and understanding of the work of the armed forces there. I draw the attention of the House to the essay in "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1994" that explains the role and organisation of the armed forces in Northern Ireland.

Although the majority of the tasks related to providing effective support to the Royal Ulster Constabulary fall to the Army, we must not forget that vital support is also provided by elements of the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines and the Royal Air Force. The House will join me in acknowledging the value of the contributions of all three services to this joint operation, under the leadership of the

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General Officer Commanding, Lieutenant General Sir Roger Wheeler, who is the first member of the Royal Irish Regiment to fill that appointment.

The armed forces have supported the RUC for nearly 25 years. During that time, more than 300,000 service personnel have served in Northern Ireland, many of them on repeated tours of duty. They have made an immense contribution to the maintenance of law and order in Northern Ireland, and their efforts have prevented countless terrorist murders and outrages. The whole House understands that and admires the sheer professionalism and bravery with which our service men and women carry out their duties, year after year. They fully deserve—and receive—our whole-hearted support.

Force levels are kept under continual review to ensure that they remain appropriate to the prevailing level of terrorist threat. We are satisfied that the present force levels are right. I assure the House that we can and will maintain forces at the present level for as long as the terrorists make it necessary.

Although it is the infantry who make the most obvious contribution to supporting the RUC, they simply could not operate without the Royal Engineers, the Army Air Corps, the Royal Signals, the Royal Logistic Corps and the other arms and services. I take this opportunity to remind the House of the essential contributions which these personnel make, which are often not sufficiently recognised.

Both the full-time and part-time elements of the Royal Irish Regiment continue to provide an essential contribution to the Army's support to the RUC. I never cease to admire the bravery and commitment, especially, of the part-time members. They continue every week to meet the demanding training and operational requirements of the Army, in addition to their civilian employment. Many of them have carried out that dangerous task for years on end. We owe them a great debt.

It is with sadness that I have to remind the House of the continuing terrorist campaign to murder serving and former personnel of the Royal Irish Regiment and of its predecessor, the Ulster Defence Regiment. Last Thursday night, terrorists murdered a man who had left the UDR nearly four years ago. In the early hours of Saturday morning, three soldiers from the 5th Royal Irish were killed in a fire in their base in Magherafelt and eight were injured, one of them very seriously. The House will wish to join me in extending profound sympathy to the next of kin of those who were killed and good wishes for the recovery of the injured.

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): I join the rest of the House in expressing appreciation for the professionalism of our soldiers in every war zone in which they are involved and for the service and professionalism that they display in Northern Ireland. On the latter point, last weekend I visited the base that the Minister mentioned a moment ago. I visited those soldiers who, thankfully, had escaped and whose lives were saved by the excellent work of all the services that were at hand.

Does the Minister understand the grief in the hearts of many people in the Province? Three young soldiers who had retired to the resting bay were burnt to death. Will he assure the families that an in-depth inquiry will be carried out to find out not only what happened and how the fire started, but whether there was any negligence? Will the matter be looked into in depth?

Mr. Hanley: Yes, I give the hon. Gentleman that assurance. There is a full inquiry being carried out at the moment. It needs to be very thorough because of the extent of the tragedy that has occurred and I assure the hon. Gentleman that we shall keep him informed as the inquiry continues. I also spoke to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) last night about the matter.

I know that the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea), who represents the constituency in which the awful tragedy took place, has taken an interest in the matter. As I say, I can assure him that the inquiry will be very deep and thorough. If we have anything to learn from the incident, we will most certainly take action.

There are good relations between the armed forces and the community in Northern Ireland. Indeed, that is essential. One important aspect of relations with the local community is the existence of a credible and effective complaints system. The armed forces have made continuing efforts in recent years to ensure that the complaints system is as effective as possible.

The Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991 established the office of independent assessor of military complaints procedures in Northern Ireland. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has today published Mr. David Hewitt's first report as independent assessor. Mr. Hewitt finds much to commend in the present arrangements, but makes a number of recommendations for improvement, which, I can assure the House, we will consider very carefully.

None of us takes any satisfaction from the need for the armed forces to continue to support the RUC over 25 years, but there are no short cuts to eradicating deep-rooted terrorism in a democracy, while acting, as we must, within the law. The armed forces have no desire to continue in the task for a moment longer than necessary. Once the terrorists on both sides renounce violence, and fully demonstrate their commitment to doing so, the armed forces will progressively be withdrawn from the streets and return to their normal peacetime role. In the meantime, it is only the actions of the terrorists on both sides that keep soldiers on the streets of the Province. It is up to the terrorists whether soldiers continue to patrol the streets for a further 25 years. For the terrorists must make no mistake —so long as their criminal attacks make it necessary, the armed forces will continue to support the RUC steadfastly and professionally, as they have done for the past 25 years.

Lady Olga Maitland: I thank my hon. Friend for giving way a second time. In the battle to combat terrorism in Northern Ireland, does not he agree that it is absolutely essential that our armed forces in Northern Ireland should have close co-operation with the Irish Army and conduct joint exercises and joint patrols? Is he aware that, at the moment, we are unable to carry out any helicopter surveillance on the border and certainly not over the border?

Mr. Hanley: I am aware of the views of my hon. Friend, but I should say that relationships between the forces on both sides of the border have never been better. We are making very constructive progress in a number of areas, but I shall willingly raise the issue with the GOC when I next see him.

May I turn to the size of the Army? With the Army heavily engaged in operational commitments throughout the world, it is right that we should keep its size, especially its front line, under review. Hence, in February last year, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence announced that we would be increasing the size of the Army by 3,000, compared with previous plans for the mid-1990s. As part of that, we decided not to proceed with the amalgamations involving four infantry battalions, thus increasing the number of infantry battalions planned by 1998 from 38 to 40. As a result, by next year, even if we were to continue to have two infantry battalions in Bosnia, average emergency tour intervals for the infantry would meet the 24-month target. Any reduction in our current level of emergency tour commitments would permit a significant increase in that figure.

However, the Army comprises more than just the infantry, and the decision that we made in December to make available an extra 3,000 personnel to increase the size of selected field Army units had, as a principal objective, increasing the resilience of operational logistic support units. About 1,000 of the extra posts will be allocated to front-line Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, Royal Logistic Corps, Royal Army Medical Corps and Royal Signals units.

As I have already mentioned in the context of Bosnia and Northern Ireland, the profile of such units may not match that of the teeth arms, but I am sure that the House would wish me to state that we acknowledge the vital contribution that they make to the success of operations and our overall military capability.

We have not reached final decisions on the allocation of all 3,000 posts, but I would expect the Royal Artillery and the Royal Engineers also to be enhanced as a result of this addition to the front line.

The Government are committed to sustaining and, where possible, enhancing the Army's front-line capability in accordance with the plans set out under "Options for Change", as subsequently adjusted by the announcements to which I have referred. The overall strength of the Army that is required to sustain this capability will continue to be kept under review, and will be informed by progress in achieving greater efficiency in the support area, not least as a result of the defence costs study.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Is my hon. Friend aware of the dismay in the armed forces, and especially in the Army, at the way in which we seem to have one study after another, continually reviewing structures and continually moving goal posts? Is he aware that last year an infantry battalion had 223 nights away from home without spending even one day on an emergency tour? That happens as various commitments continue to expand, as the goal posts move and as the Army continues to shrink.

Mr. Hanley: I accept that when we talk about overstretch we tend to talk about entire battalions. When considering the pressures that we impose on individual soldiers and officers, we must ensure that they are not overloaded. Almost all the soldiers and officers whom I have met relish the tasks that they are given. Indeed, they joined up to be able to help the nation in that way.

I know that there are few in this place who are as experienced in Army matters as my hon. Friend, but whenever he speaks in the House on Army affairs he asks us not to use the Army for something. The best morale is achieved when soldiers are busy doing what they joined up to do. Of course, families must be, and are, taken into account. We will continue to ensure that we do not overstretch any individual soldiers or officers.

Mr. Brazier: Soldiers do indeed join up to undertake operational tours. I shall give my hon. Friend a specific example of another battalion, the 2nd Battalion of the Princess of Wales Royal Regiment, a fine regiment. It provides an example which could be applied across the board as it applies to any infantry unit. Why is it that on returning from an operational tour—the sort of tour which men joined up to undertake—and before moving on to an exercise of the sort that men joined up to participate in, they spend months and months on end away from their families performing buckshee tasks that have nothing to do with operational purposes or training? One such task is several weeks as administrative extras at the Royal Tournament.

Mr. Hanley: My hon. Friend is, therefore, giving notice that he would not mind if the Royal Tournament were scrapped. Many members of the armed forces greatly value the Royal Tournament and the ceremonial and other tasks that are part of the fabric of our society. According to my hon. Friend, they would rather spend perhaps the 24 months between active operations blancoing boots and painting stones white. I am sure that my hon. Friend will recognise that to be a member of the armed forces is to engage in a multi-faceted role. The training and other tasks that are taken on are taken on willingly.

I say to my hon. Friend—I shall do so again and again—that we will ensure that we do not overstretch any individual units. There are, however, many tasks that our soldiers wish to carry out. I believe that my hon. Friend, while exercising what he believes to be the conscience of our armed forces, will find that most of our men are engaged happily on the tasks that they are asked to carry out.

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. I do not take upon myself the consciences of the armed forces. He might consider whether his comments about blancoing boots and painting stones white are worthy of a man in his position. I assure him that young men and, these days, young women join the armed forces for action. They relish action, involvement and the duties that they carry out in the name of the House, among other institutions. They do not relish being treated as skivvies and being made to work every hour that God gave, without much appreciation. Furthermore, they feel that, having been in Northern Ireland, as the Coldstream Guards were until the middle of last year, it would be reasonable to have some opportunity to speak to their wives, or to find a wife if they are single, before being sent out to Bosnia. They relish being in Bosnia, but they want some time to enjoy themselves as well.

Mr. Hanley: I do not believe that anyone could disagree with my hon. Friend, except for one thing: I am sorry if I made a mistake, but one blancos belts and polishes boots.

My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) makes an important point. We shall not allow our forces to be overstretched or to be put at risk. We take their families, their private lives and the times when they can

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relax seriously. The Army is an excellent employer and has the good will of the forces well in mind, as do the House and the Government.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): As my hon. Friend is having brickbats thrown at him, I thank him for his excellent work in consolidating the 18 base workshop in Bovington in my constituency and for accepting the excellent management bid. The workshop is trying to increase civilian management. How many uniform personnel have been released back to the Army as a result of administrative jobs being performed by base workshops? Are not the Government ensuring that people who sign up for the armed forces are used in active duties rather than in back-room jobs?

Mr. Hanley: I cannot give my hon. Friend the exact answer that he wants, but I can say that, because of the changes, it now takes 18 weeks instead of 34 weeks to service a main battle tank. We are seeing, therefore, the benefits of that policy.

The Labour party keeps calling for a defence review. I am sure that it will not be lost on my hon. Friends that if there were a defence review, the front-line capability of the armed forces would be almost equivalent to the number of Labour Members in the Chamber. Under our policy, consider the talent that we have paraded here. I think the importance that the Conservative party attaches to defence is shown by the number of Conservative Members who are in the Chamber.

It would be right to dwell on "partnership for peace." The changed strategic environment is reflected in the partnership for peace initiative, launched by NATO at the January 1994 Brussels summit to develop military and political co-operation with central and eastern Europe. Fourteen states have joined the partnership and we hope and expect that Russia will join soon. Plans for PFP activities are still being developed by NATO and we hope to see at least one land-based and one maritime exercise under the auspices of PFP this year, both with British participation.

Nationally, we are pursuing a vigorous and comprehensive programme of defence-related co-operation with central and eastern Europe. Details were set out in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1994", which were published last week.

I should like to highlight our plans for a military exercise later this month in Poland. It will involve the deployment of a company from the 1st Battalion, Devonshire and Dorset Regiment, which is stationed in Germany, to Poland for five days of peacekeeping-related exercises with the Polish armed forces in the near future. It will be the first time that British forces have exercised on the territory of a former Warsaw pact country.

The initiative is important not only in terms of the United Kingdom-Polish defence relationship, but as being very much in the spirit of PFP. Later this year, elements from 5 Airborne Brigade will exercise with their Polish opposite numbers.

We are also looking at exercising in Hungary, both on a bilateral basis and with the Germans, and during his recent visit to Moscow my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister agreed in principle with President Yeltsin to the idea of exercising with the Russian armed forces. There is also a continual and wide-ranging series of exchanges involving small delegations from the Ministry of Defence and various other units.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Before my hon. Friend finishes his point about the Germans and the Russians, will he consider seriously the future of Britain's land commitment to the central front in Europe? Is it reasonable or right that after 31 August this year, if the Russians leave the eastern part of Germany on time, we should continue to deploy a large, static, inflexible Army in Germany at a cost of £1.3 billion a year and employ more than 10,000 local German civilians as cooks, mess stewards, batmen, gardeners and so on? Would not the money be much better spent on stopping mergers of good regiments like the Gurkhas and the Gordons and on securing the very best equipment for our armed forces?

Mr. Hanley: My hon. Friend raises an important point which is certainly part of an on-going debate. However, we have NATO commitments which must also be considered in conjunction with our own national interest. NATO is a partnership which has served us extremely well over the years and I believe that our NATO commitments are very important. I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) that we will consider exactly what he has to say.

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): I agree with the remarks made by my hon. Friend the Minister about our past relationships within NATO. However, does he agree that NATO is now increasingly called on to act outside what is traditionally known as the NATO area of operation? In looking at procurement and the future needs of the British armed forces, is not it time that we sat down with our NATO partners and put together a new framework to determine exactly the future role of NATO and, in particular, the NATO area of operation? Until we have defined that, we are asking NATO to act in an ad hoc way around eastern Europe as well as within the NATO area of operation.

Mr. Hanley: My hon. Friend has raised an important matter of current debate. However, such matters are more the concern of my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to define NATO's areas. All I can say is that we had a successful summit. The nations that are part of NATO have confirmed the importance of NATO and the fact that we believe that the United States and Canada are vital to the security of Europe. Through the partnership for peace programme, we have shown a way of bringing nations from central and eastern Europe into NATO over a period. Therefore, I believe that NATO is evolving and changing. We must ensure that we keep NATO's strengths and do not damage them as we continue to debate the issues raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning).

I want now to consider the Territorial Army. Hon. Members on both sides of the House attach great importance to the TA. The Government also continue to attach importance to a well-trained, well-equipped and deployable Territorial Army. Hon. Members will be aware of our plans to introduce new reserve forces legislation aimed at making it easier to call out the volunteer reserves in circumstances short of war.

Individual members of the TA have, of course, regularly joined the Regular Army on short-term engagements to fill

particular posts. Currently, we have 43 officers and 61 soldiers from the TA serving with the Regular Army, including those I mentioned earlier called out for service in support of our operations in the former Yugoslavia.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State announced two weeks ago an important development of that concept in the form of a pilot scheme for the use of composite TA units in support of operational commitments undertaken by the Regular Army. We plan to deploy a TA platoon to the Falkland Islands garrison from July to November this year. That platoon will be drawn from the TA in Northern Ireland and will operate in support of a regular company of the Royal Irish Regiment deploying on a four-month unaccompanied tour. We plan to follow that up with a company-size deployment from March to July next year.

That trial of the utilisation of the TA demonstrates the confidence of the Government in the ability of our volunteer reserves to play a greater part in our overall defence effort. If the trial is successful—as I fully expect it to be—it will open the way to the use of the TA in support of the Regular Army in a wide range of operational deployments, including those under UN auspices.

I hope that it is unnecessary to add that the choice of the Falkland Islands for the trial does not indicate any lessening of our commitment to the defence of our dependencies in the south Atlantic. Our investment in the infrastructure at Mount Pleasant has long enabled us to minimise our in-place forces without affecting our responsibilities. There will remain a substantial Regular element to the garrison during the period of the trial. The Falkland Islands offer excellent training facilities, and the tour length is four months—rather than six on operational deployments elsewhere—which should make it easier to recruit volunteers and permit the results of the trial to be assessed more quickly.

We have not yet reached conclusions on the future size and shape of the Territorial Army, but I hope we shall be able to make announcements on this before too long. I realise that many hon. Members have strong views on the matter and I assure them that we will be taking those into account before reaching any final decisions.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): Will the Minister say something about the removal of the mines sown during the Falklands war?

Mr. Hanley: All I can say now is that the matter is being dealt with. I think that we have found a sensible compromise for clearing the remaining mines. I will write to the hon. Gentleman if there is anything that I might want to add to that. I believe that the details of the plan are acceptable to the Falkland Islands Government and to us.

Finally, I pay tribute to the many civilians of all grades who work both at home and abroad in support of the Army. They are often much maligned or forgotten. Some people even forget that they are part of the armed forces at all. Life as a civilian in the Ministry of Defence is certainly no sinecure these days, if it ever was. Far from spending their days leisurely writing minutes to each other while sipping tea, they are very much involved with all aspects of Army policy and operations. The pace can be—and often is—fast and furious. Without them, the Army would find it extremely difficult to undertake the tasks that I have just been outlining.

Civilians have been involved in all areas of risk in which the Army has recently been engaged—the Falklands, the Gulf and, currently, in Bosnia; as well, of course, as Northern Ireland. It is our policy to employ civilians, either directly or on contract, in tasks which do not require military skills. That is not because one is better than the other, but simply because it makes obvious good sense to concentrate the deployment of highly trained service men in roles that only they can perform.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): Can my hon. Friend explain the Government's position on "Front Line First"? The same clearly necessitates a definition of where the front line starts—all else follows from that. If my hon. Friend cannot give us a definition, which group will be charged with defining the notion?

Mr. Hanley: The concept is easy to understand, but not straightforward to define. In essence, the "front line" refers to the overall operational capability which our fighting units, such as warships, battalions, combat aircraft and so forth, need to fulfil the military tasks allocated to them, as set out in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1993". For that capability to be maintained, of course our fighting units must be properly supported, directly or indirectly, by the remaining parts of the services and by the MOD.

Support areas make a vital contribution to the front line. It would be wrong for us to think that there is either front line or support. We must be careful that, in reducing unnecessary support, we do not hollow out to the extent that the front line collapses, particularly in a transition to war.

The difference between front line and support is, by their nature, that they are capable of engineering a separate analysis. That is why the defence costs study is looking into areas of support to maintain our front line. We want to make sure that our front-line units receive the essential support which they need, but that there is no money being spent unnecessarily on support. Any penny that is spent on support is money wasted from the front line.

I hope that that has helped my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith)—it has certainly helped me. I can assure my hon. Friend that my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement and I have spent many hours during the past three months dealing with the defence costs study. In each area of support we are conscious that the front line is dependent on that, and we must make sure that we do not undermine our front line in that way.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): I am most grateful to my hon. Friend, as I know that he has been putting up with a lot of interruptions. If that is the definition of front line—and therefore of "Front Line First"—can he tell the House what is second?

Mr. Hanley: That one is easier. "Front Line First" means that we will spend our money first on maintaining our front line. The Labour party wants a full defence review, which means that it wants to question every commitment and the way in which we carry them out. If necessary, it wants to reduce our front line and our capabilities. The Government want to preserve our front line because we believe that every single one of the commitments that we have been given can only be carried out properly with the equipment given to us for that job.

[Mr. Hanley]

There were 50 tasks set out in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1993", and those tasks are vital to the interests of our nation. We believe that we should preserve those tasks with the men, the training and the equipment to do those jobs. We believe that, in preserving our front-line capability, we must maintain our commitments. We believe, therefore, that money must be spent first on equipping our troops properly to do the job. The Labour party believes in querying everything and putting the whole of our nation's forces into a period of instability; we are not prepared to accept that.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Will the Minister tell us whether nuclear weapons are in the front line? If they are not, and if the policy is to put resources into the front line, should not this country be cutting seriously—much more seriously than the Government are doing—its nuclear weapons?

Mr. Hanley: I am always grateful for giving way to the hon. Gentleman, because it is through him that we hear the authentic voice of the Labour party. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the nuclear deterrent, which is the minimum necessary to deter, is very much in our front line, and that is why we are investing so much training and money in its creation and maintenance.

We are fortunate to have in the British Army probably the most respected army in the world. It is the Government's intention to ensure that, through proper equipment and training, it retains its capability to operate in the full spectrum of military activity from high-intensity conflict to peacekeeping. I believe that our plans will ensure that that is the case.

We are the best peacekeepers in the world, but one becomes the best peacekeeper by being the most credible and best soldier. I believe that our plans will make sure that that continues, and that the Army of tomorrow will be as well able to meet its challenges as the Army of today. It is evident that it is able to confront the challenges of which I have spoken. It is a credible Army, it is a great Army and it is one of the best armies in the world.

4.34 pm

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): It is a sign of the times that we are debating the Army on the eve of the local elections in Scotland, England and Wales. Ministers have obviously chosen today because they knew that the House would be full.

I have to congratulate the Minister on the attendance on his Benches. Conservative Members have undoubtedly come along here to give him uncritical support for his reconstruction of the British armed forces. Alternatively, I was thinking earlier that, if I was a Conservative Member with the choice between sitting here today or going out and meeting the voters, I would probably sit here.

Mr. Robathan: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Reid: Perhaps I can answer the hon. Gentleman's question before he asks it. If he was about to ask why so few Labour Members are present, I can tell him that there are good reasons.

One is that there is a political war going on outside, and one of the first rules of war is to concentrate one's forces where one's enemies are weakest. We have done that today, by sending them out to meet the great British people. The second reason is that my colleagues have absolute faith and confidence in my ability to deal singlehandedly with the massed ranks of, as a senior member of the 1922 Committee would say, "that lot on the other side". Therefore, they did not feel compelled to come along today.

If I have not answered the question of the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan), I shall give way to him.

Mr. Robathan: I should just like to point out that many of us here have already been out canvassing in support of our local candidates, but felt that the debate was an important enough occasion to come back to the House to listen to the hon. Gentleman's pearls of wisdom, which I am sure we are about to receive.

Dr. Reid: Absolutely. I thought that the hon. Gentleman's colleagues, having canvassed, had retired to the seclusion of this place in despair.

It is a bit of a cheek for the Minister to attack my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), who normally makes helpful interventions in support of those on the Front Bench. If the Minister cares to read the "Statement on the Defence Estimates" issued by his Department less than a couple of weeks ago, he will see on page 19 in paragraph 3 an unqualified, absolute statement about nuclear disarmament:

"Complete and general nuclear disarmament remains a desirable ultimate goal".

I can see no difference between that and the expressions of the Labour party conference. So let us have less of it from the Minister.

Conservative Members may be concerned about the prospect of a Labour Government taking over, but let me tell them that they have an even more worrying prospect ahead of them. In the context of the remarks that I am about to make, I can give a relative welcome to the fact that both junior Defence Ministers are still at their post, and that the Secretary of State for Defence is still at his.

All things are relative. The qualification of my welcome is the rumours now sweeping the House that, as an outcome of the internecine warfare in the Conservative party, the Secretary of State for Defence might soon be replaced. That first hit the leader columns of the newspapers this morning, although it has been doing the rounds for some time.

I notice that, in considering the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, the right hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo), *The Guardian* has blown the gaff:

"Why not, then, give Mr. Portillo a proper, grinding job? And top of the list, surely, would be defence."

So *The Guardian* and one or two others are beginning to suggest that the Chief Secretary might be put in charge of defence. That comes as a revelation to me. I thought that he had been in charge of defence for the past two years.

I warn Conservative Members. When we told the Government that they would need to put the infantry back, they said that they would not, and then they did. When we told them that they would cancel the tactical air-to-surface missile, they said that they would not, and then they did. Indeed, in the last debate, when we told them that they would start to purchase cruise missiles to put in their submarines, they laughed. I understand that they are now considering purchasing cruise missiles.

Let me make another prediction: Conservative Members, many of whom consider themselves to be on the

right of the Conservative party, will rue the day that the present Chief Secretary to the Treasury transferred to the Ministry of Defence.

I do not know what the Chief Secretary does to the enemy, but he frightens the life out of me, and I know that he will frighten the life out of members of our armed forces. If he assumes that post, it will no longer be a case of someone from the Treasury emasculating the armed forces of this country from a safe distance. He will be stationed at the Ministry of Defence, making it even easier for him to wrap his hands around the neck of the British armed forces. It will be a sad day if that person ends up in charge of the British armed forces. *[Interruption.]* The Minister thinks that this is a despicable personal attack. I am not concerned about the merits of the individual; I am concerned about the British Army. The only thing worse than lions led by donkeys is lions led by a Treasury hyena who will pick over the bones of what is left of the defence budget.

Mr. Hanley: In no way was I commenting about any attack that the hon. Gentleman might make in his speech. I merely said that it was surprising that, in the first five minutes of his speech about the British Army, the hon. Gentleman should take a small snippet from a newspaper, pile conjecture upon all sorts of guesswork and then try to base the future defence policy of this nation upon something which he had picked up as a fag end from a political journalist. It is not worthy of the hon. Gentleman.

Dr. Reid: Is it not funny how the guesses from this side of the House, based not on the tremendous back-up of 100,000 civil servants but on fag ends and snippets, almost inevitably turn out to be correct; whereas the Minister, with all his advice from across the road—whether it is about the infantry, a strategic nuclear weapon, mismatch, overstretch, continual defence cuts or the lack of a defence review—inevitably turns out to be wrong?

I raised this subject precisely because I believe that the politics represented by the right hon. Gentleman will be bad for the armed forces. Time will prove the Minister or me correct. I will be gracious enough to apologise to him if my guess is wide of the mark, as he will apologise to me. Should it happen, I warn our colleagues on the Back Benches that it is a mid-19th century political trend.

It is a political trend which, unlike the last Prime Minister, is not only committed to the free market but absolutely opposed to any form of Government expenditure. It is particularly opposed to unproductive forms of public expenditure such as expenditure on the armed forces. I place that warning on record. As I said earlier, Back Benchers in the Conservative party will have time to judge that trend when it arrives.

Mr. Brazier: The hon. Gentleman has been on his feet for nearly eight minutes. Is he going to touch on the subject of today's debate at all?

Dr. Reid: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I will. Incidentally, the Minister was on his feet for 57 minutes, and said nothing. I hope that I have been slightly more substantial in seven minutes than the Minister was in 57. At the beginning of such debates, it is customary to dispense with party politics.

Mr. Tom King (Bridgwater): Ten minutes late.

Dr. Reid: The right hon. Gentleman laughs. I am about to pay tribute to those who have served and died in the British armed forces. In the annual service debate, it is customary for hon. Members on either side of the House to begin their contributions with a tribute to service men and women. I reiterate what the Minister said earlier: I believe that we possess not one of the finest armed forces in the world but the finest, as the British Army continues to demonstrate in Bosnia, Northern Ireland and elsewhere.

We are fortunate to have at our disposal officers of the highest calibre, who command men and women with a sense of discipline and skills that are truly exceptional. It should be a matter of pride for everyone in this country that those qualities of professionalism and dedication are recognised the world over.

That fact was reflected most recently in the decision of South Africa's transitional executive to request British military advice on how to reform its security forces for the post-apartheid era. I hope that the Minister and the Secretary of State will be able to give that request speedy and sympathetic consideration. I understand that it is being considered at present.

In paying tribute to the men and women of the British Army, it is also important to remind people, as the Minister did, of the human cost attached to the dangerous and demanding commitment associated with serving in the armed forces. Since the last Army debate, about 130 soldiers have died while in service other than from natural causes. In choosing to risk their lives for their country, they deserve our abiding respect and, as the Minister said, our sympathies are with their friends and relatives.

The Minister also referred to the tragic deaths last week of three young soldiers from the Royal Irish Regiment, following a fire at their base in Northern Ireland. I am glad that the Minister was able to assure us today that a full inquiry into the incident has been instigated. I also hope that a safety review of all British Army bases will be conducted in an effort to ensure that there is no repetition of this dreadful incident.

I know that the capital costs of renovation and reconstruction are extremely high—particularly in Northern Ireland, because of threats to contractors and so on—but I hope that, apart from the investigation of the specific incident, a review will be conducted of the construction and fire safety of Army bases throughout Northern Ireland.

I turn from those tributes to Bosnia, a subject which I think will feature most prominently in tonight's debate. It is now 19 months since British troops were deployed as part of the United Nations protection force in Bosnia-Herzegovina. My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) has just returned from meeting our troops in Bosnia, where he discussed current events with them.

At the beginning of our intervention, the British contingent numbered about 2,300 personnel. It has now grown to about 2,350. The mandate of our troops has been revised to include the protection of designated safe areas as well as the protection of humanitarian aid convoys.

There are many views in the House about the situation in Bosnia. They range from those who believe that we should not intervene in the conflict, to those who think that our limited and carefully defined intervention has been insufficient and would like to see a massive intervention of troops. I know that my colleagues will make their views

[Dr. Reid]

known tonight, but I will confine my remarks to certain general areas which I think all of us—wherever we stand in that spectrum of views—will agree are important.

It is vital that we think through the implications of our involvement in Bosnia, both in terms of how we can encourage a resolution of the conflict and in terms of how the United Nations should respond to similar conflicts in the future. This process of reflection is necessary because it seems to me that important lessons are not being learned and that some of the serious flaws in the United Nations operation in Bosnia have not been rectified.

The blame for this failure does not lie with the officers and soldiers serving with UNPROFOR. They have done a remarkable job in what are, by any standards, extremely difficult circumstances. The real problem has been a failure of political leadership.

Mr. Hanley *rose—*

Dr. Reid: It would be helpful if hon. Members opposite did not assume that I was attacking them, either personally or collectively, but listened to what I have to say.

At the most fundamental level, the United Nations has failed to establish a clear and achievable objective or set of objectives for its intervention in the Balkans. It has thus made the formulation of a coherent strategy well nigh impossible. The result is an operation which, for the most part, has been hastily improvised, with the United Nations responding to events rather than shaping them.

Of course, it would be unfair not to recognise the enormity of the challenge confronting the United Nations. It would also be over-simplistic not to recognise that the United Nations is nothing more than the collective will of the international community.

But peace support missions of the kind being conducted in Bosnia are much more ambitious and difficult to execute than the traditional peacekeeping missions of the past, when monitoring forces were deployed after a ceasefire had been established. In seeking to respond to civil conflicts on a more active basis, the international community is, quite frankly, on a steep learning curve. Even so, it is clear that the United Nations has been too slow in adapting to the new environment.

I have two major concerns which affect the British Army and our armed forces in general. First, there appears to be a distinct reluctance to make difficult decisions about the role of the international community in resolving civil conflicts within states as opposed to conflicts between states. At times, the United Nations operation in Bosnia has borne all the hallmarks of an unhappy compromise between those who wish it to remain a humanitarian mission and those who wish UNPROFOR to take sides and assume an active combat role. That tension has been ever present. The most damaging consequence of that confusion is that insufficient resources have been provided to secure the operational objectives established by the United Nations. Nowhere was that failure more apparent than during the attack on Gorazde.

I fully understand the complexities of an issue such as that of the operations around Gorazde. I do not know whether the phrase is "good fortune", but I had the opportunity to visit Gorazde last November to speak to the Serbs on their front line and to the Muslims inside Gorazde.

One of the horrible examples of the complexity of that civil war was the fact that the Muslim commander and the Serb commander, who met once a month to try to agree some access to supplies to Gorazde, called each other by first names when they met at that monthly meeting, because not only had they been to the same school and the same class, but they actually played in the same football team. That small illustration shows the complexity and intensity of the conflict.

The establishment of designated safe areas without the deployment of the ground forces required to make them a reality is typical of the wishful thinking and extemporisation that have characterised the United Nations' involvement in Bosnia. First, that is, above all, a failure of the international will, but it is in that context that our soldiers are being asked to conduct their operations.

Secondly, the process of policy formulation is far too incoherent and cumbersome. Military operations require clear, unambiguous command structures, yet it is often difficult to determine who is calling the shots in Bosnia. As an experienced organisation with an established military command structure, it made sense for NATO to assume a role as an operational arm of the United Nations in Bosnia.

However, the paralysis of the UN decision-making process during the Gorazde crisis forced NATO into an entirely different role—that of issuing ultimatums. Even though NATO continues to act at the behest of the United Nations, it is in danger—I put it no higher—of creating an impression of becoming an independent factor in the conflict. We should all be aware of that danger.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Is not the real danger of involving NATO in the conflict in Bosnia that it will be sucked into a war that it cannot possibly win, the result of which will be great demoralisation among the nations who support NATO, and it will then be acting very much against the defence interests of the west? Until now, NATO has never had to declare its hand. It has been the veiled threat—or should I say the mailed fist?—which deterred Russia. As a result of being drawn into the conflict, NATO may be seen as the emperor without any clothes. I will not ask the hon. Gentleman to comment on the effect on our American allies of the lack of determination that is currently being displayed.

Dr. Reid: That was not a unilateral decision on NATO's part. NATO was asked to go in by the United Nations, as an instrument of the United Nations, and therefore, provided that the objectives of the intervention and the rules of engagement and the operational definition are clear, I do not think that that danger exists. However, where there is muddled thinking at the political level in the United Nations, the danger exists.

I shall say a third thing about NATO and its relationship with the UN in Bosnia, which to some extent echoes some of the fears of the hon. Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill). A debate is taking place in Europe about the future architecture of European defence structures, and some of our allies seem to believe that, if the NATO alliance failed to pass the virility test of Bosnia, it would fail to justify its existence in the post-cold-war world. Action at any cost by NATO seemed to be the order of the day.

I believe that the opposite is the case. In the absence of a clear political strategy, clearly defined military objectives, adequate resources and unambiguous command and control structures, it is not non-action of NATO but

ill-considered botched action by NATO which carries the greatest risk for the future of NATO, and for its acceptance as an effective organisation.

Sir Archibald Hamilton (Epsom and Ewell): Does the hon. Gentleman agree, however, that, however good the command structure was of NATO in a military adventure in Bosnia, the acid test of whether NATO held together or not would be the number of casualties that were subsequently incurred? Does he believe that there is the political will among nations in Europe to incur substantial casualties in Bosnia and not pull out their troops, which is what I believe would happen?

Dr. Reid: That is one of the imponderables. It is like asking, "How long is a piece of string?" to ask how many casualties NATO would have to suffer before the will of countries was undermined. I take the hon. Gentleman's point. All that I can say to him is that the Opposition fully supported the intervention of British troops, and subsequently the involvement of NATO in pursuit of a clearly defined military objective with clearly defined political objectives.

However, the problem with a complex situation such as that in Bosnia—a fluid and dynamic situation—is that, in the United Nations, especially if there is not an unambiguous command and control structure from the politicians down to the operations, sometimes there are shades of grey between a clearly defined defensive position and a partisan position.

The perfect example of that is safe areas. All hon. Members in the House would be committed to the safeguarding of civilians and the protection of safe areas. It becomes more complicated when, in the safe area, there are not only vast numbers of innocent civilians but significant numbers of military on one side or the other. Without adequate troops on the ground to act as a buffer between the two sides, it is almost impossible to make out, among the propaganda and the fog of war, who is carrying out the initial aggression.

I think that there is a will in the west for intervention to take place, but I do not think that there is a will in the west to go beyond the position in which we are now to a massive military intervention of several tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of soldiers, to impose a peace on a three-way civil war. Should there be a ceasefire between the parties, I think that there would be considerable will in the House and throughout the country to put troops in to monitor that ceasefire. That is quite different from trying to impose one.

Moving away from NATO but still on the subject of Bosnia, on a wider scale it is apparent that some contingents of UNPROFOR are failing to accept the authority of the multinational command structures, and are continuing to take orders from their national Government rather than from UN-appointed commanders. The alleged incident last week—I use my words carefully because it has not been confirmed, although there is allegedly some substance to it—when French forces were reportedly joining a British contingent relieving Gorazde and were apparently unilaterally withdrawn following consultations with Paris, shows an unacceptable degree of political interference. I believe that the integrity of the UN operation and the lives of British service personnel will be in danger unless the command and control procedures are rigorously adhered to. I hope that the Government have been at pains to make that clear.

Whatever the outcome of the tragedy that has been played out in that beautiful but unblessed land of Bosnia, it is abundantly clear that painful military lessons must be learned by political and service decision-makers. We ignore those lessons at our future peril because we may well have to confront many more Bosnias, although not necessarily on the same scale, if we are to play a full part as a member of the Security Council of the UN.

I want to turn to something that is less tragic and more entertaining. I refer, of course, to the "Statement on the Defence Estimates". The publication last week of the 1994 statement was an event of little significance except in so far as it revealed the cynicism of the Government's approach to the management of British defences.

In this connection, I should like to refer to some comments of Professor Keith Hartley. In the case of last year's defence estimates, Ministers told us that we were being presented with the most open-minded, fulsome and statistically comprehensive series of estimates that had ever been issued. We were told in 1993 that we now faced a challenge. Such was the information given in the defence estimates last year that no one with a brain in his head could fail immediately to absorb it and, on that basis, produce his own defence review.

At that time we queried what we were being told. Referring to those estimates, Professor Hartley, who, as some hon. Members may know, is the director of the centre for defence economics at the university of York, says:

> "An obvious starting point is the 1993 statement on the defence estimates and the details of expenditure shown in the defence budget. Unfortunately the 1993 defence budget is shown in terms of the new management strategy, compared with the economists' functional costing approach used in previous years. As a result, it is no longer possible to cost specific force elements, such as the Navy's aircraft carriers, its Polaris submarines and its destroyers and frigates. Nor is it possible to cost the RAF's strike forces —they are now combined with transport aircraft—or the allocation of research and development expenditure between major air, land and sea systems.
>
> On this basis it is misleading to claim that the 1993 SDE provides more and better information for economists and for Parliament. It provides less and worse information. Without more information on the costs of different force structures and the various defence roles, it is not possible to have a sensible debate on UK defence and the implication of smaller defence budgets."

That is precisely what we said at this time last year. It is precisely why we criticised the Government for the figures that they produced—this was not done in a meaningful fashion—and precisely why we criticised them this year again. It takes tremendous ingenuity to produce a 105-page statement on defence estimates and say practically nothing. Anyone reading through the statement will find any number of expressions such as "we hope to", "we expect to", "we may" and "at some stage we shall decide". It must be the largest-scale exercise in procrastination that anyone has ever seen.

We said last year that the statistics provided were largely meaningless. Even in the Government's own terms, the figures did not add up properly. Assuming correct arithmetic, however, the method of triple-hatting and the new management strategy manner of presenting the statistics made it almost impossible to carry out any meaningful costing.

Mr. Hanley *indicated dissent.*

Dr. Reid: The Minister of State shakes his head. I have just read, for his benefit, comments by the professor at the centre for defence economics at the university of York, and I could quote a dozen other defence economists who have said precisely the same thing. There must be something wrong if, on this subject, the Minister is the only person out of step.

I thought of the hon. Gentleman the other night when I was considering ways of handling statistics. Perhaps I should pay the hon. Gentleman a compliment by referring to a similarity that came to mind. I refer to the person whom some people regard as one of the finest Secretaries of State for Defence we have had since the end of the second world war. Certainly, with the benefit of hindsight, people in the military see Denis Healey—now Lord Healey—in that light.

I do not want to be too flattering to the Minister, but I should like to quote from a small piece in a very neat little book called "Brief Lives" by the illustrious correspondent Alan Watkins. Speaking of the early life of Healey, Watkins says:

> "He returned to the Army. He ruptured himself on a field training course and, after an operation, was sent to a depot in Woolwich to await posting. He was dispatched from Woolwich to replace a drunken bombardier as a railway checker at Swindon station. It was here that he acquired a distrust of statistics. He was expected, apparently, to count the number of service men and women getting off every train, getting on every train and, for some reason, getting off and back on the train. He decided he would make up the figures. Assailed some weeks later by conscience, he asked the ticket collector at the barrier to give him the numbers of people who were getting on and off the train. After three weeks he discovered that the ticket collector was making the figures up too. He was duly commissioned in the Royal Engineers, in movement control."

Nothing changes. I suggest that both Ministers present—the Minister of State for Defence Procurement and the Minister of State for the Armed Forces—have all the qualifications to be moved to movement control of the Royal Engineers. The statistics given in the current defence estimates are indeed vacuous—though perhaps that is too substantial a word.

With the conclusion of the defence cost studies in July, the simple question is this: why did the Government choose to publish such a vacuous, empty White Paper in April instead of waiting until they had some announcements to make? The answer is quite simple: by publishing the White Paper in April, rather than in July as in previous years, Ministers will be able to get the annual two-day defence debate out of the way before announcing another round of swingeing cuts, thus allowing them to evade the embarrassment of having to explain themselves to Parliament. Every hon. Member knows that that is precisely why the details have been announced now.

Furthermore, by postponing until the July the announcement of further cuts, the Government hope to avoid the wrath of the electorate in the run-up to the local and European elections. In other words, they are running scared both of the electorate and of Parliament.

Mr. Hanley *indicated dissent.*

Dr. Reid: The Minister shakes his head in denial. Well, he is not convincing anyone.

A couple of weeks ago, I was in the constituency of South Dorset, where everyone suspects—probably because of a suspicious nature—that the current review of sea systems will report in July, not by coincidence but because that will be after the local and the European elections. The situation is exactly the same with regard to the White Paper.

Mr. Ian Bruce: The hon. Gentleman was kind enough to come to my constituency, and I know that he was listened to avidly, as I have been listening avidly to him for about half an hour. But the people of South Dorset are in exactly the same position as myself, in that they do not know exactly what Labour's policy on the Army is. I should be most grateful if the hon. Member would get to that part of his speech.

Dr. Reid: One of the reasons for the hon. Gentleman's remaining in a state of blissful ignorance—presumably by choice—is that he did not come to the meeting in Weymouth that was attended by many of his constituents. He might at least do me the courtesy of saying that I did not attack him personally when I was in the constituency. I can assure him that I shall remedy that omission the next time I am there.

The hon. Gentleman's constituents who came to the meeting not only expressed concern but also, to a man and a woman, went away delighted at the next Labour Government's commitment to a defence diversification agency and to matching resources to commitment, as well as to a full defence review.

Is it not a tragedy that the Tory Member of Parliament for the constituency that has the Portland naval base and sea systems and the Defence Research Agency—the former soon to go; the latter soon to disappear to Bristol—as well as Bovington camp, has to ask a Labour Member of Parliament what his own constituents think about defence issues? If I were in that position, I should not be here; I should be knocking on doors and listening to constituents.

Mr. Bruce: If the hon. Gentleman reads *Hansard* tomorrow, he will realise that he has been misquoting me. My constituents, many of whom vote Labour, would like to know the Labour party's policy on defence—not on diversification or on criticism of the Government. The hon. Gentleman owes it to the House to state what that policy is.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Dr. Reid: I hear a few "Hear, hears" from Conservative Back Benchers. I thought that I was starting to do precisely what the hon. Gentleman has asked of me. Perhaps I started at too high a level with the United Nations. I am beginning at one side and working across.

I was putting forward what I regard as genuine problems concerning our soldiers and armed services in their United Nations involvement, which over the past two years has been a fairly big aspect. In a previous debate, I dealt with Northern Ireland, and I shall come to a number of other issues relating to the British Army. In response to some comments from the Minister, I have said that there is nationwide concern about the Government's plans. That concern exists in the hon. Gentleman's constituency as well as in others.

This debate is about not the Labour party's defence policy but the defence statement, so it is appropriate that most of my remarks should be on that subject.

Lady Olga Maitland: It would help the House enormously if the hon. Gentleman clarified one point. Given that the Labour party has committed itself to a

reduction of £6 billion a year in defence spending, which force will it take a slash at: the Army, the Navy or the Air Force?

Dr. Reid: The hon. Lady will understand that, if one starts with the wrong premise, one inevitably reaches the wrong conclusion. The Labour party has not committed itself to such a cut. The Labour party conference passed a resolution calling for a reduction in defence expenditure. As Conservative Members do not know the Labour party's constitution, they constantly make that mistake.

May I therefore explain that, to get into the party programme, a conference decision must have a two-thirds majority. If it is included in the party programme, it may be selected for the party manifesto by a meeting of the National Executive Committee and the shadow Cabinet, who have the final decision. The results of their decision were contained in the last Labour party manifesto, which represents the decision of the whole Labour party. If the hon. Lady cares to read the last Labour party manifesto or the next one, she will find no mention of a £6 billion cut.

The hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) has, however, fortuitously landed on a figure of £6 billion, which happens to be the precise amount by which the Government cut the defence budget between 1985 and 1995-96. So, although she wrongly accuses the Labour party of reaching a theoretical decision at a conference to cut the defence budget by £6 billion, her party has in practice cut the defence budget by exactly that amount. I hope that I have clarified the matter for the hon. Lady.

On the "Statement on the Defence Estimates", it has been suggested that another 25,000 service and Ministry of Defence jobs may be axed as a result of the defence costs study, and that many important military support services will be either cut or privatised. Given the size of the savings that need to be made, sizeable cuts are clearly in the offing.

Conservative Members know that. As they retire to Bermuda, the Bahamas or wherever in late July or August, they will know that more sizeable cuts are coming. I am astonished at the looks of surprise on the faces of Conservative Members. They must have forgotten the last day of school term last year. Suddenly, once all the debates on the defence estimates had taken place, it was announced that another 5,000 jobs would be cut in the Royal Navy. That will happen again this year.

Despite the Government's claim that they seek to put the front line first, it is transparently obvious that they are putting their electoral interests first. The origins of the study lie in the Government's desire not to find more resources for our badly overstretched front-line combat units, but to provide the funds needed to repair some of the appalling damage which they have done to their public finances, and to reverse last month's betrayal on tax. That is the real reason why further cuts are being made to the armed forces.

The defence costs study is fraudulent, for two reasons. First, if substantial savings could be made in military support costs—the Government say that those are less important than the front line—which do not compromise the combat effectiveness of our armed forces, according to the Government's declared reasoning, they should have been the first target for cuts in 1990. If substantial cuts are to be made in non-essential areas, why were not they made at the beginning rather than now?

Instead, the front line units of the infantry of the Royal Armoured Corps and the Royal Artillery bore the brunt of "Options for Change", which the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Sir A. Hamilton) introduced. Had it been possible to save billions of pounds by cutting ancillary services, cutting a few cars or privatising catering, the right hon. Gentleman would have done it. He would not have suffered the slings and arrows of outrageous Back-Bench Members by cutting front-line infantry forces, the Royal Armoured Corps and so on, if billions of pounds could have been saved on non-vital services.

Secondly, the study is a fraud because it is erroneous to draw a simple distinction between the front-line forces and the services that support them. If anything today has symbolised the confusion of the Ministry of Defence, it is the vain attempts of an articulate and able Minister of the Crown to define what he meant by "front line" and "support". If the Minister does not even know the meaning of "front line", how can he put it first or anywhere else?

I should have thought that the Ministry of Defence, which has placed so much emphasis on this matter, would have briefed the Minister on the meaning of "front line". We were told that the Minister and his hard-working colleague, the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, had spent months discussing the matter, yet, when the Minister of State for the Armed Forces was asked the simple question, "By the way, what is the front line?", his answer went round in circles. Conservative Back Benchers smile, because they know that what I am saying is true. I do not intend to spoil their careers, so they may straighten their faces again.

If the Ministry of Defence does not know what the front line is, how can it claim that it is putting it ahead of anything else? No one is likely to object about staff cars being leased in future rather than purchased, or medical provision for the three services being integrated. But many of the suggested cuts would have a direct and detrimental bearing on the operational effectiveness and, equally important, on the morale of our armed forces. Reductions in ammunition stocks and spares would be particularly damaging.

During the Gulf war, we managed to keep the Challenger tanks of the 1st Armoured Division going only by cannibalising the rest of the British Army's units for spares. Similarly, the problems that we had procuring sufficient ammunition for operation Granby in the Gulf, even from friendly powers, should alert us to the dangers of becoming dependent on the largesse of others for our military needs.

It must be remembered that that comes on top of market testing and contractorisation. When I was in Cyprus recently, I discovered that the maintenance for our Army trucks is to be put out to the local garage.

Lady Olga Maitland: Quite right, too.

Dr. Reid: Absolutely: let us help small businessmen. I have nothing against small corner garages in Cyprus. I am all for helping them to prosper, but I doubt whether, in the midst of a crisis, they would be prepared to work for 48 or 72 hours or for four days on end.

Sir Archibald Hamilton: They would have to be paid.

Dr. Reid: The right hon. Gentleman takes the words out of my mouth. I also doubt whether they would keep to the

[Dr. Reid]

initial contract in that situation. We may find that, during a crisis, either we cannot depend on private contractors or that we shall pay through the nose for their services and lose any potential savings. I have nothing against the private sector. I am sure that the quickest and most efficient people are the Kwik-Fit fitters, but I doubt whether they would turn up in the middle of a battle in the Gulf to repair tanks. The right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell seems to believe that they would.

Sir Archibald Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman talks about fitters not appearing in the Gulf. There seemed to be no shortage of fitters from British Aerospace and GEC prepared to work in the Gulf at the time of that war.

Dr. Reid: Absolutely, and I pay credit to their courage and the wages paid to them. But they were not exactly in the front line fixing tanks.

Have Conservative Members suddenly abandoned their commitment to the principles of the free market, believing that, no matter how pressing the demand of the customer, the producer will produce at the same price? If they believe that the price will not rise according to market demand and wish to abandon their principles, that is fair enough. I happen to think that they are probably correct. When there is urgency and demand, the price at the very least will go up and the risk may not be taken unless we pay through the nose for it.

Similarly, it has been suggested that, in future, the supply of military hardware should copy the just-in-time method used in the private sector, whereby materials are provided as they are needed rather then held in stock. That idea shows a fundamental ignorance of the realities of military power. The Government have to understand that the British Army cannot be run like a branch of McDonald's. It requires high levels of preparedness, and an ability to respond to unforeseen events at short notice.

In March, the Secretary of State said that military vehicles would in future be leased rather than purchased; he even refused to rule out the possibility that the British Army's tanks might one day be provided on that leaseback basis. Again, that shows a complete failure to understand the practicalities of defence procurement. Items of modern military hardware, such as tanks, armoured fighting vehicles and combat helicopters, are state-of-the-art equipment, made to order. They require large amounts of capital investment and secure orders. They are not like Ford Escorts, rented from Avis or Hertz. It is naive and dangerous to shape defence policy on the assumption that they either are or can be.

Other leaked conclusions of the defence costs study would be equally damaging. The suggested 50 per cent. cut in the size of the defence intelligence staff would be a bizarre move, given that the Government have repeatedly stated that the nature of the security threat facing Britain has become more unpredictable since the end of the cold war.

Let me say one word about those who work in Britain's defence industry. They serve the country no less than those who serve in uniform. They make an essential contribution to our nation's security. Last week, I walked to Downing street with workers from the Royal Ordnance factories, who accept that defence expenditure will be cut and that jobs will have to go, and who ask one simple thing of the Government—that they play some role in intervening, in helping diversification and conversion. The Government sit and wash their hands.

Even if we assume that the Government's free market philosophy applies in every sector of the economy, the one area where it cannot possibly apply is in defence production. The reason is simple: that the only customer in Britain for the purchase of defence goods from our manufacturing sector are the Government. There is no free market inside Britain. For the Government, as the only customer, to say that they will withdraw and leave it to a supposed free market to take over is a complete abdication of our responsibility and our obligations to those who work in the defence industry.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): The hon. Gentleman has referred to diversification. In these debates—I have sat through many of them—we continually hear about diversification and about what the Government are not doing. Why is it that Opposition Members, when their Benches are full, which they are not today, continually attack defence sales and, in particular, the work done by my hon. Friend the Minister of State in selling our goods overseas and creating and maintaining precisely the jobs about which he is talking?

Dr. Reid: There is a brief three-part answer to that. First, we do not attack defence sales per se. Secondly, we are against defence sales to countries that are controlled by dictators. Thirdly, we are even more against defence sales when the British Government sell to countries which are run by horrendous dictators and then lie to Parliament about whether they are doing so, as they did in the case of Iraq. *[Interruption.]* I cannot be more specific. Machine tools were sent to Iraq. No doubt the hon. Gentleman will say that that is just like selling a screwdriver; they would never sell arms. The Scott inquiry, which was meant to sideline the issue, has been a dripping roast of the Government's perfidy when it comes to the sale of arms abroad.

We are objecting not to the sale of arms, but to the sale of arms to dictators who will use them for the suppression of human rights, particularly when it is done under a cover of deceit, not only to the British people but to the British Parliament. We stand by that.

The Government must give a commitment that the conclusions of the defence costs studies will not be implemented until two conditions have been met—first, until a proper strategic defence review of existing military commitments and capabilities has been conducted, and secondly, until the Government produce a plan for managing proposed reductions in a way that minimises the damage to our industrial base.

Opposition defence spokesmen have stood at the Dispatch Box and tried, until we were—I almost said blue—pink in the face, to demand that the Government carry out, to persuade the Government, to beg the Government to carry out, a full defence review. It is now being said so often from this Dispatch Box that Ministers groan when it is brought up.

We have said that such a review is a way not of avoiding hard decisions but of confronting hard decisions. There are few people left in Britain, inside or outside the defence community, who, after three years, do not agree with what the Labour party has been saying. The Select Committee on Defence has argued for it. *[Laughter.]* Conservative

Members laugh, but I do not know how much more evidence for a defence review I have to put before the House.

Let us take an academic, an ex-field marshal, and a Tory newspaper, *The Sunday Times*. First, I shall take the academic, Professor John Baylis, of the department of international politics, university of Wales. I shall read only his first and last paragraphs. He said:

"Ever since John Nott's courageous but abortive attempt to re-assess the whole basis of British defence policy in June 1981, the Conservative government has been reluctant to embrace the term 'defence review'. The embarrassment caused by the Falklands war and the partial reversal of policy has resulted in the term being exorcised from Whitehall vocabulary."

The final paragraph says:

"muddling through, salami-slicing, and increasing 'multiple ear-marking' will increasingly make the task of balancing foreign and defence policy more difficult. Sooner or later, a defence review will become necessary, whatever title it is given. The primary task of such a review will need to be the development of a clear conceptual framework for strategic policy, which at present seems to be absent."

An academic may be easily dismissed, but Field Marshal Lord Bramall, speaking in another place, said:

"When I was Chief of the Defence Staff eight years ago"—under a Tory Government—

"I led the Defence Staff in a number of strategic studies on all the various parts of the world, trying to establish what was important, what was of special interest and what was of less concern and of lower priority. All that would have been a great help in establishing the sort of guidelines that have been mentioned this evening."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 16 March 1994; Vol.553 , c. 293.]

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. May I inquire of the hon. Gentleman whether the remarks of Lord Bramall that he is quoting were made in this Session? If so, it is not open to him to quote them.

Dr. Reid: Those remarks were made in this Session, but they have been quoted at considerable length in a newspaper, so I shall continue reading not from *Hansard* but from a newspaper article which Field Marshal Lord Bramall wrote, where he quoted himself as saying:

"All that would have been a great help in establishing the sort of guidelines that have been mentioned this evening."

Then—this is the significant part—he added:

"Although those exercises were treated with polite interest, no Minister was prepared to sign up to them, so they never saw the light of day."

That is not an academic; that is a field marshal.

Finally, I come to the modern equivalent of *Pravda*, that well-known left-wing newspaper run by the well-known Marxist-Leninist from Glasgow, Mr. Andrew Neil. I believe that he has gone to somewhere called Fox—I make no further comment. He said:

"A proper defence review is needed."

This is *The Sunday Times*, not the Labour party. He continued:

"The Foreign Office fears it, because it would mean Britain's withdrawal from areas such as Cyprus, where we maintain a post-imperial pretence. The government as a whole resists it because it fears the political consequences."

[HON. MEMBERS: "Rubbish."] Hon. Members need not tell me that it is rubbish; they should tell Mr. Neil of *The Sunday Times*: he wrote this.

He went on:

"The government as a whole resists it because it fears the political consequences."

[Interruption.] The anger coming from the Conservative Benches shows that there is nothing worse than a lover spurned when *The Sunday Times* turns on the Tory party. Mr. Neil continued:

"France, more historically aware of its vulnerability and fearful of the dangers of Islamic revolution close to home, has carried out such a review and increased its projected defence spending as a result."

Note the words

"has carried out such a review and increased its projected defence spending as a result."

The quotation from *The Sunday Times* continues:

"Britain should follow suit. We are still a military force to be reckoned with, as Bosnia, the Gulf and the Falklands conflicts show. But the rot in Britain's armed forces has gone on for too long. There are no generals or admirals still in command who believe Britain has the right forces to perform all the duties currently demanded of them. Simply reducing a layer of top brass does nothing to remedy that. This time, a U-turn in policy really is needed."

Admirals, field marshals, academics, leader writers, politicians, pundits, experts, service men, service women, the Select Committee and every major political party all know that a full defence review is needed, yet the Government stand against it.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Reid: I shall finish my point, and then I shall let the hon. Gentleman in, as he is the Chairman of the Select Committee.

I could understand the Government's attitude if making a U-turn was an extraordinary exception to their normal course of action, but U-turns have now become the norm. What is so different about a defence review? The Government have U-turned on everything; the Prime Minister has changed his mind on everything. For the sake of service men and women in the British armed forces, why can he not change his mind on the defence review, and let us make a rational attempt to analyse our commitments and to match them with our resources?

I now give way to the hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor).

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not want inadvertently to mislead the House. The current Defence Select Committee has not called for a defence review, and will not do so.

Dr. Reid: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for clarifying the position. The Select Committee has not used those exact words.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Jonathan Aitken): Withdraw.

Dr. Reid: The Minister wants me to withdraw. If what I have said offends anyone, of course I withdraw it.

What the hon. Member for Upminster says means that there are at least four people in Britain who agree with the Minister—or perhaps more; I do not know what the majority on the Select Committee is: there may be six. The fact remains that everyone else has called for a defence review. And anyone who reads the reports of the Select Committee, written by the hon. Member for Upminster and his colleagues, cannot but come to the conclusion that the Committee would at least see a defence review as beneficial.

[Dr. Reid]

What astonishes me more is the absolute commitment by the Chairman of the Select Committee that the Committee never will call for a defence review. If it is not discourteous for me to say so, that seems presumptuous.

While the Minister sets about dismantling our military support structures, nothing is being done to relieve the growing burden on our front-line forces. I shall not labour that point, because it was made earlier by the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier). For the Minister to stand at the Dispatch Box and say that there is no overstretch flies in the face of everything that everyone knows, including —I hope that the Minister is listening—the Select Committee, which has probably been the Government's biggest critic on that subject.

According to the analysis produced by General Sir Martin Farndale last October—I presume that Ministers have seen it—48 battalion-sized units would be required to cover the commitments in the emergency tour plot, which at that time did not include the extra battalion sent to Bosnia, and to provide a 24-month tour gap, which the Government say they want.

A further 16 battalions are required to cover other garrison and training duties, and to act as a force reserve for Northern Ireland. That means that a total of 64 battalions are required to meet all commitments. The hon. Member for Canterbury raised the matter earlier, and Sir Martin Farndale laid it out in specific detail.

Although the British Army will have 67 infantry, Royal Armoured Corps and Royal Artillery battalions, only 45 of them will be large enough to complete tours without being significantly reinforced. That will have two consequences. First, the Government's claim to be able to achieve a 20-month emergency tour gap will be little more than a cruel fiction. Secondly, at any given moment, units from each of the British Army's eight brigades will all be in the middle of completing an emergency tour.

In summary, Farndale argues that the minimum number of battalions is 64, and the minimum number of troops required is not 119,000, as the Government say, but 132,000, which I believe is much nearer to the figures suggested by the Select Committee. *[Interruption.]* I do not know whether the Chairman of the Select Committee agrees with me about that.

Mr. Hanley: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that it is a Labour commitment to add those numbers back?

Dr. Reid: I absolutely confirm that it is a Labour commitment to provide resources to match our commitments. *[Laughter.]* I should have thought that that was what all hon. Members wanted—to match our resources to our commitments. If we do not do that, the people who suffer will be not Members of Parliament but those who have to suffer the demoralising working practices that the hon. Member for Canterbury, a member of the Minister's own party, has described.

Even the Minister must know that there is a complete lack of morale in the armed forces. It is often said that the Queen must think that the world smells of fresh paint; no doubt, when the Minister makes his visits, his world, too, smells of fresh paint. But during his visits to units of the Army throughout the country, even he must have detected the sense of demoralisation, uncertainty and overstretch. It does not stop the soldiers carrying out their duties in a professional manner, but it is dangerous in the long run.

Mr. Hanley: May I tell the House and the hon. Gentleman yet again—I believe that I have told the House the same thing on five separate occasions during the last six months—that, on the basis of current commitments, we expect infantry tour intervals to be 17 months in 1994-95 and 24 months in 1995-96. That will be after the completion of draw-down.

If the second battalion in Bosnia were not replaced, intervals would be 20 months in 1994-95 and 30 months in 1995-96. On the assumption that the second battalion is replaced—we have not made that decision yet—the target of 24 months is still achievable. When I replied to my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury earlier, I acknowledged that of course certain units and individuals are overstretched, but it is not our policy for that to happen, and we shall continue to investigate every time we hear that it is happening.

Dr. Reid: That is the argument between us. The Minister says that he expects something to happen, or that it is the Government's policy for it to happen, but I say that it will not happen on the basis of the present figures. That is the bone of contention between us, so it is no good the Minister saying, "I repeat what I have said before." I am producing the figures based on the calculation made by Sir Martin Farndale, who goes through all the figures and shows a shortfall of about 12,000.

Perhaps for once the Minister is right; time will tell. If we achieve the 24-month tour interval, I shall accept that graciously. But we both agree that, in the meantime, there is overstretch. That goes without saying, because we have not met the target—and I doubt whether it can be met.

I have spoken at considerable length—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I know that many hon. Members, especially Conservative Members, want to speak. They always complain that few Opposition Members speak on military matters, so I know that they would be more than happy for me to continue for another hour. *[Interruption.]* Their cries of abuse make me think that perhaps they do not want to tempt me to do so.

It is a cliché to say that we live in a changing and challenging world, but it is true. That world is also fantastic and yet fraught—but it does not pay to be too pessimistic, as we sometimes are. Over the year that has passed since the previous Army debate, two glaring examples have given us reason for optimism.

At the time of the previous debate, in view of the long and apparently intractable problem in the middle east, few would have thought that we should see the Prime Minister of Israel and the chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation standing side by side on the White House lawn. We can take heart from the thought that the long struggle to reconcile the security of Israel with the national rights of the Palestinians, while by no means over, is at least now being conducted within a framework of peace.

Secondly, we can take heart from the fact that the long dark night of apartheid in South Africa has apparently ended. Although there are still many hills to climb in the search for full democracy, reconciliation and reconstruction in that country, at least the foothills of freedom have been scaled.

There are reasons for optimism, but there are many reasons why we should not be complacent either. Earlier today I saw, as no doubt many hon. Members did, television pictures of what is happening in Rwanda. I was staggered by those photographs. I am also slightly staggered by the apparent indifference in the west to what is going on in Rwanda.

I do not suggest that there is a racial element, but I and my party believe that the appalling slaughter of innocent people in Rwanda must be stopped. We believe that the United Nations and the Organisation of African Unity need to organise the immediate deployment of military forces to try to end the genocide. The death of a Rwandan child is just as tragic as the death of a Bosnian child, and we must not allow either to be ignored.

There are problems elsewhere in the world, such as Somalia and the Maghreb, with the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. There are problems in Asia, where there is now a huge arms race, disputes over the Spratney isles, potential conflict with North Korea, and friction between India and Pakistan.

There are problems in the Transcaucasus, such as the forgotten war involving Azerbaijan. It does not reach our television screens, yet hundreds of thousands of refugees have been thrown off the land, supposedly because of the issue of Nagorny Karabakh. There is the problem of Georgia where any spark could once again ignite the civil war between the Georgians and the Abkhazians. All those are indications of an insecure world.

In central America, we are withdrawing troops from Belize. We ask the Government to reiterate our commitment to Belize at every possible stage. There is genuine concern on both sides that we should not make the mistake of allowing the troop withdrawal from Belize to fall into the pattern of the withdrawal of HMS Endurance. There are signs that, once again, Guatemala is flexing its muscles. Anything that can be done to reiterate our commitment to Belize, even if only ensuring that, when Harriers go to South American air shows, they stop over in Belize, would be welcomed by the Opposition and by many Conservative Members.

With all those issues, not to mention Bosnia, there has never been a greater need—I come back to the point about the United Nations with which I started—for clarity of thought, definition of strategy, provision of resources and resolution of will. Tragically, none of those qualities has been provided at national level under this Government.

Britain is therefore completely unable to play its part at the heart of international decision-making—where it should be—on these issues. We believe that the Government are failing the House, the country as a whole and, above all, the men and women who are the subject of today's debate—the men and women who serve in the British Army.

5.42 pm

Mr. Tom King (Bridgwater): The hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) has addressed the House for one hour and eight minutes. I have heard him make shorter speeches; I have to tell him that I do not think that they suffered from being shorter.

I appreciated the anecdote that the hon. Gentleman told about one of my predecessors in office—Lord Healey. It confirmed a lot for many of us when he told the story about the way in which Lord Healey made up the figures when he was asked to count the numbers getting off trains at Swindon station. The story showed the sublime indifference to the facts that marked some of his later utterances in the House, including those made during the period when he was on the Back Benches. The feature that many of us appreciated about Lord Healey was the way in which he boldly faced out any suggestion that there was any tiny weakness in Labour defence policy at any time. Referring to the Labour party conference at which motions that he did not like were passed, he spoke of party members being out of their tiny Chinese minds.

The hon. Member for Motherwell, North was speaking in the fine tradition of Lord Healey when he described Labour defence policy as though the decisions taken by overwhelming majorities at Labour party conference were of no interest to the Labour party and the House, and of no consequence to the shadow Cabinet, whose members had blithely dismissed those decisions. Labour defence policy is as hollow and empty as the Benches behind the hon. Gentleman today. I am sure that he is more than relieved that this debate is taking place on a day when most of his hon. Friends—or all his hon. Friends—who profoundly disagree with him about defence policy can be absent from this place. It is symbolic that the Conservative Benches are packed with hon. Members who take a close interest in the defence of this country and that the Opposition Benches are virtually vacant. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said yesterday in the House, the issue of a strong defence for our country is one on which Conservative Members are wholly united.

I pay the warmest possible tribute—hon. Members will understand that, coming from me, that is no platitude—to the men and women of our armed forces. As today's debate is on the Army, I pay the warmest possible tribute to the Army. This is a difficult time for the Army's leaders and commanders, it is a difficult time for morale and it is a time of change which poses particular challenges. I have the greatest respect for the professional way in which the Army has addressed the challenges that it faces. I also pick up the tribute paid by my hon. Friend the Minister to the way in which General Sir Michael Rose is carrying out his duties in the eye of the storm and under the eye of world public opinion. He is doing no harm to the profession of arms as it is recognised in this country. I had the privilege of having him as a brigadier with me in Northern Ireland when I first went there, so I know something of the great quality and calibre that he brings to his task.

I apologise to the House for the fact that I am about to quote some words that I wrote on 23 July 1991 in the foreword to the White Paper, "Britain's Army for the 90s":

"Our commitment remains clear; an Army for the 90s and beyond, smaller but better-equipped and supported, fully manned and well able to meet its commitments at home and abroad, and to provide for our security in the future as it has done so well in the past."

The assessment on which that foreword drew was the recognition that we had changed from the previous structure of our forces, which was designed primarily to cope with the threat of a massive surprise attack in Europe.

I wrote of our forces:

"Now they need to be designed to respond to a wider spread of risks, normally acting in concert with our NATO or Western European Union allies in a coalition of the kind assembled to deal with Iraqi aggression, or in other ways in support of the United Nations. Our forces can be smaller than now, but they must be flexible and mobile, and well-equipped to deal with a range of military capabilities, including the most sophisticated, both inside and outside Europe."

[Mr. Tom King]

I wrote that, in doing the reshaping, we had taken account

"of our Gulf experience which clearly demonstrated the greater value of all-professional forces and the flexibility they offer . . . The Gulf also demonstrated the vital roles of the supporting Arms and Services, and the need to maintain a proper balance between them and front line armoured and infantry units."

I resile from not a word of those statements in the White Paper.

I draw attention in particular to the importance of fully manned and properly equipped units. It was not always like that. The hon. Member for Motherwell, North referred to the fact that at the time of the Gulf crisis the units that we had were not fully manned. When the reduction in the number of battalions was announced and the suggestion was that we went from 55 to 38, and then to 36, we had the man-strength only for 51 battalions. We were pretending to have a larger front-line force and a larger traditional line of regiment than we were maintaining. The story of the Challenger tanks and the problems that we had in operating at that time were well known. There were also problems of stretch in finance which led to problems on the training side.

The options programme had two factors that helped its reception among our armed forces. First—this was not always the case—once the changes were made, the new structure was fully funded. I attached great importance to that full funding at that time because I had made an announcement of changes, which, over the four-year period under the options programme, were intended to reduce our defence expenditure by 6 per cent. in real terms. Over the previous five years, our expenditure had been reduced by 11.5 per cent. in real terms, not on the basis of making any changes in structure but by significantly reducing the funds available. That is called salami slicing. I sought to stop that and—I say in all seriousness to my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench who are facing very difficult challenges—we must ensure that that problem does not reappear. We may change commitments, we may alter structures and we must define where those economies will fall and how they will fall, but we owe it to our smaller armed forces to ensure that they have the proper level of equipment, the proper level of training and the proper level of resource needed in support of their activities.

We kept our promise on the full funding of the programme. I believe that we kept the promise—it is now in the good hands of my hon. Friend the Minister and I look to him to maintain that promise—of properly equipped forces. We have opportunities today because of the Challenger programme, with the Warrior, with the AS90, with the Starstreak, with important logistic support such as DROPS—the demountable rack offloading and pickup system—which proved itself so significantly in the Gulf, with the new communications system, with the light attack helicopters and with heavier lift capability. Those resources, with their new capabilities and with the new quality of equipment, can make our Army of the 1990s the best equipped that it has ever been. That is an undertaking and a pledge that I know my hon. Friends support and which the Government—I am pleased to see—have continued to maintain.

May I also draw attention to the implication that flows from "Front Line First"? The supporting arms are vital. In opening the debate, my hon. Friend the Minister referred to the quality of the logistic troops in Split and said that they were vital to our operation in Bosnia.

Let us consider the capabilities shown in the Gulf. Of course media attention focuses on the teeth arms, but the teeth arms know that back-up support is absolutely vital, whether in the signals, the ordnance or in the catering corps—the latter, incidentally, was vastly superior to anything that our allies had, with the possible exception of the French, who were too far away for accurate comparison, and certainly enormously superior to anything that the United States could offer. That combination of proper support facilities comprises both those in uniform and those in civilian clothing. I know that the hon. Member for Motherwell, North studies these matters, but I do not think that he was as familiar as he should have been with the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Sir A. Hamilton).

One particular point about the Gulf conflict concerns the amount of good technicians and capable civilian support out there, whether they worked for Rolls-Royce, British Aerospace, Vickers, GEC Marconi or Racal. I told the various companies before the conflict started, when we first saw the possibility of being involved in deploying substantial resources in the Gulf, that there was no point in spending a lot of money on expensive shows, stands and demonstrations and on entertaining those responsible for procurement decisions—or in whatever ways they spent their money on sales promotion after it was all over. I told them that the biggest show of military equipment was about to be launched, that the Gulf conflict was the biggest practical exhibition and that it was vastly in their interests, in the national interest and in the interest of our international responsibilities to ensure that their equipment served our forces as it was expected to do.

That message clearly got home. I said that to the chairmen of all the major companies and they responded magnificently. The people working with them gave outstanding support. That was not a one-off; I judge that it will be a continuing feature. With the increasing sophistication of military equipment, there will undoubtedly be a call for additional support for our forces from the civilian side.

When we consider the structure of our armed forces, it is, I suppose, not very difficult now to be persuaded of the case for flexibility. There is a continual tension over planning in the Ministry of Defence—a tension between the need to plan for high-intensity operations and the constant pull of the more frequent, low-intensity operations. There is the pull of Northern Ireland, which continually draws us into low-intensity operations. We do not deploy artillery in Northern Ireland; we do not deploy tanks there. It is not that sort of operation.

Of course, Bosnia and peacekeeping in its various forms are taking us in that same direction. In that sense, and only in that sense, I thank God for the Gulf war, which reminded us or warned us that suddenly one may find the need for high-intensity conflict and the ability to organise and combine all the arms, which are needed for such a sophisticated military operation. On the day on which the European fighter aircraft is taking its first official flight in Britain and when people may be inclined to challenge the need for more sophisticated equipment, it is worth noting that the Gulf war also taught us and warned us that we may not be fighting or facing the full might of the Soviet Union, with all its sophisticated arms programmes, but that those

arms and others like it are sold to many other countries with which we may find ourselves in conflict and which we may need to face.

I listened to the comments that the hon. Member for Motherwell, North unwisely launched into at the end of his speech about the Scott inquiry and I recalled that, at the start of the Gulf war, the French Mirage jets were not able to fly in the opening aerial exchanges because the French had already sold Mirage jets to the Iraqis. The hon. Gentleman referred to the arms that we sold to Iraq. We do not sell a single weapon to Iraq and he knows that. Yet other countries did. It is no secret about the Mirage jets. I have a photograph of myself standing on the dock in Al Jubail next to a large load of missiles marked with the label Aerospatiale and stamped with the date February 1990 and the code number AM38. Any Conservative Member who is familiar with the military will know that they are Exocet missiles which had been recovered from the Iraqis.

That warns us that sophisticated weapons can fall into other hands and is why we must always ensure—it is a heavy responsibility for my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench—that our service men are not at a disadvantage if we ask them to stand up for international peace and justice. We must ensure that they have the equipment to give them the protection which they need and which is able to compete against anything that they may meet.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): We shall wait for the outcome of the Scott inquiry. However, there is no doubt that at my local airport, we trained Iraqi pilots who flew against us during the Gulf war.

Mr. King: There were Iraqi Airways pilots. I flew with them. That was the only way in which, as I remember, one could get in and out of Baghdad. Over the years, we traded with Baghdad businesses when we did not have sanctions. Many British companies were actively involved in trade with Baghdad and we certainly trained Iraqi pilots. When I flew into Iraq at that time, I was slightly reassured by the fact that their pilots were well trained. They were civilian pilots doing their work. The hon. Gentleman is trying to use that diversion to excuse the casual description and quite incorrect allegation of his hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North that we sold arms to Iraq. I am glad that we have made that point quite clear.

The Ministry of Defence and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State have produced a document that sets out helpfully the way in which commitments arise and the way in which they are met. There is a trap in that approach because, if some of the commitments come to an end and there are changes—Belize is one example, Hong Kong is another and Germany, and numbers in Germany, could be another—the inference might be drawn that it would be right further to reduce the level of our armed forces.

In terms of the options programme, I always regarded the end of the cold war as a move to the position in which we now find ourselves. Broadly speaking, we are where we should be in peacetime post cold war.

We would be foolish to anticipate or expect an end to the violence in Northern Ireland. We all know of the British Army's commitment and of the tremendous role that it has played in Northern Ireland. If there were a ceasefire and a permanent cessation of violence, some voices would no doubt suggest that there was an opportunity for a further significant reduction in the Army. I know that my right hon. and hon. Friends would not be so foolish as to anticipate in any way a change in Northern Ireland. The future is far from clear, and the responsibility, as it were, for change lies elsewhere: it is for the IRA and Sinn Fein to cease their campaign of violence. Were there to be a cessation of violence, I would strongly urge my right hon. and hon. Friends not to see that as an opportunity for a further significant reduction in our armed forces.

The approach of the Government and of individual Ministers in seeking to identify savings where they can be made is the right one. I urge them to announce the results of their investigations and examinations as soon as they conveniently can. We heard the flippant remarks of the hon. Member for Motherwell, North, but he has never had the responsibility of government. He does not know the range of considerations that are involved in the massive exercise that the Government are undertaking.

It will be an impressive achievement if the results of the exercise can be produced as early as July. It is important that the Government strive for that early date, precisely for the reason outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier).

We are entitled to expect from our armed forces discipline and good co-operation at difficult times. In all my dealings with the armed forces and the Ministry of Defence I found that they understood the need for change, but they looked for guidance. They needed to know where they were going—where their path was leading and where it would end. Given the need to make further savings, and bearing in mind the changes that are in hand, I urge that an announcement should be made as early as possible so that those involved know clearly how things stand.

I stand second to none in my admiration of the way in which our forces have coped. I recognise the problems in relation to adequate tour intervals and the related problem of stretch, which I realise will arise during the period of change and with the amalgamation of some units and the reforming of others. The problems raised by Bosnia are less than welcome because they are clearly an additional burden. I understand that the present situation is extremely difficult and places a heavy responsibility on our forces —a responsibility greater than I would have wished them to carry. It would not be acceptable if we did not see an end to the present state of affairs. As I see the period of change coming to an end, I hope that we shall move towards the tour intervals that are essential for our forces.

As I have said, we ask much of our forces and they discharge their obligation superbly. We owe it to them to provide the clearest possible programme for their future. They should know that they have the overwhelming confidence of the House and that we support them in the tasks that we ask them to undertake.

6.4 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I yield to no one in the importance that I attach to single service debates of this sort. I cannot resist the view, however—it may be shared elsewhere—that to some extent our discussions take place in a vacuum. We know, for example, that in July further announcements are scheduled to be made which may well affect the Army. However, I do not propose to go down the road followed by the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid), who spoke from the Opposition Front Bench. I am content to wait until the

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announcements are made. We shall then be better able to test ministerial assertions that capability will not be affected.

On this occasion, as on virtually every occasion since the "Options for Change" announcement was made in the House in July 1990, there is a dispute about whether a defence review is desirable. The hon. Member for Motherwell, North cited several authorities—academics and others—in support of his proposition. I can add to them the *Financial Times* of 27 April 1994. Perhaps it is not quite the compelling authority that it once was in the view of Conservative Members following the position that it adopted shortly before the general election, but we find in a leading article on 27 April the following:

"In short, there is no cohesion of European thought or action, and little underlying agreement on the future presence in Europe of US forces. A proper white paper would set out the foreign policy options and the defence decisions that flow from them. The starting point would be to focus British eyes on both Nato and the European Union. That is more important"—

the writer continues with a degree of cynicism that I would not necessarily support—

"than the defence of Tory seats in a borough or two."

An article in *The Economist* of 30 April 1994 stated:

"With the world changing fast, and war apparently as popular as ever, Britain sorely needs a fresh review of its military commitments. Such a review, for instance, would decide whether Britain should continue equipping itself for every type of warfare. A possible alternative would be for Britain and its NATO allies to plan together so that each specialised in particular strengths. Thus Britain might maintain a sizeable fleet and amphibious ability, but leave heavy armour to others. In any case, much deeper Treasury cuts would probably make such specialisation inevitable."

It is inevitable that the intellectual argument will continue about whether what the Government are proposing to do is based on a rigorous analysis of commitment. In due course we shall have a debate on a White Paper—after the defence costs study announcements have been made, I hope—and there will be an opportunity for a more wide-ranging discussion of strategic issues of the kind to which I have referred briefly. Today, however, I shall concentrate—I consider this to be appropriate—on the Army. I am surprised that so far—to some extent this was contradicted by the right hon. Member for Bridgend—

Mr. King: Bridgwater.

Mr. Campbell: Yes—the right hon. Gentleman would not make much of a Welshman at Cardiff Arms Park.

I am surprised that we have not concentrated more on procurement. If flexibility and mobility are truly to form the basis upon which our Army is equipped to meet future tasks, surely procurement lies at the heart of that approach. I believe that there is an overwhelming moral obligation on the House to ensure that when we send men—and, increasingly, women—into circumstances in which their lives are at risk, they are properly equipped.

As the right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) said, there are practical considerations. Events in the former Soviet Union have brought significant amounts of military equipment—some of it highly advanced—on to the market. That equipment has become widely dispersed. One of the factors is the effect of the conventional forces in Europe treaty, which has only added to the volume of equipment coming on to the market. I think that no one in this place would depart from the principle on which the right hon. Member for Bridgwater took his stand—that it is essential that United Kingdom forces are never at a disadvantage, wherever they have to be deployed.

We have not always acquitted ourselves well in procurement policy. There should be a sign reading, "Remember the SA80" above the desk of every civil servant and every service man or service woman in the armed forces with responsibility for procurement. We can hardly be proud of the history of that weapon's development, production or experience under battle conditions. It is generally accepted that it has become an extremely effective weapon, but there is little doubt—the report of the Select Committee on Defence made this eloquently clear—that it could hardly be regarded as a paradigm of good procurement.

I hope that the Minister will tell us how close he is to making an announcement on the attack helicopter and the support helicopter. If flexibility and mobility are to lie at the heart of the Army that we seek to fashion for the remainder of this century, early decisions on those two important projects, which have considerable consequences for employment and the leading edge of technology, would be highly desirable.

Some hon. Members have referred to the lessons of the Gulf. I agree with the right hon. Member for Bridgwater about the civilians who assisted the effort in the Gulf. The hon. Member for Motherwell, North might have been on stronger ground if he had told the House that the civilians who assisted in the Gulf were British citizens and were taking part in an operation which had almost universal political support in the United Kingdom. He might have said that it would be unwise to rely on local support in Cyprus, just as some of us feel anxiety about the need to rely on merchant shipping sailing under flags of convenience for the transport of equipment in time of war.

The whole of the 1st British Corps had to be stripped to field the armoured division in the Gulf. I hope and trust that we have learnt the lesson of that experience. In addition, we had become so committed to the central front that much of the equipment was suitable for a land battle in western Europe but unsuited to the climate or terrain in the Gulf. In the procurement of equipment, therefore, one should bear in mind that equipment may have to be used in various scenarios and theatres.

The United Kingdom has command of the rapid reaction corps. I think it is fair to say that that appointment was accorded a considerable amount of political significance. Certain obligations go with that command. The UK has an obligation to provide most of the corps' headquarters staff and to contribute substantially to its forces. A strong body of opinion believes that the decision to accept that command and its obligations has to a substantial extent shaped the size and nature of the Army for the foreseeable future. If we are engaged in a radical review of commitments, as I believe that we should be, we should ask whether the continuing command of that corps is justified.

Events have moved on since September 1990, when the UK was first asked to take up that command. The original anxiety about the Eurocorps has substantially diminished and its commitment to NATO now seems unequivocal. As the NATO summit in January authorised joint task force operations, whereby European members can use the full facilities of NATO without the involvement of the United

States, one must again ask what is the justification for the rapid reaction corps and why Britain should continue to command it.

Another feature is the continuing deficiency in strategic uplift capacity, which has an effect on the potential effectiveness of the corps. The fundamental question to which the House and, I hope, the Government should address themselves is whether it is right that the shape of the Army should be so dependent on the fact that the United Kingdom has command of that formation.

The hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) speaks with great authority on defence matters and I am sorry that he is no longer in the Chamber. I had to disagree with him on the issue of the tactical air-to-surface missile, but there have been many occasions when I have agreed with him. He made a telling point when he raised the issue of the continued presence of the British Army in Germany. I wonder whether he feels so strongly and so radically about the Royal Air Force. The Minister of State for Defence Procurement will remember that I raised that subject in the Royal Air Force debate earlier this year.

The Government should embark on such radical thinking. Unlike others, I do not lay great stress on what appears in *The Sunday Times*, but there was a hint of such radical thinking in that newspaper last Sunday. If that hint reflects what is being thought in the Ministry of Defence, I applaud that thinking because it is the type of radical thinking that is now required.

In the course of his observations, the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood referred to what seemed like a possible amalgamation of the Gurkhas and the Gordons. I do not know the Gurkhas that well; knowing the Gordons, however, I think that it would be a pretty curious amalgamation. To some extent, the hon. Gentleman's argument was borne out in the figures quoted by the Minister. It is notable that if the second battalion continues to be deployed to Bosnia, the effect will be to neutralise the withdrawal from Belize.

We all want the 24-month interval between emergency tours—that is generally accepted by the Army as being a suitable period—but even on the figures produced it seemed to rest on a pretty fragile foundation. For that reason, the hon. Gentleman will not be surprised to learn that those who are anxious to preserve the Gordons and the Queen's Own Highlanders are arguing, even at this stage, for a reprieve for both regiments. The amalgamation is scheduled to take place on 17 September this year, so the Government still have time. If that reprieve were granted, it would go a long way towards assisting the fragile basis on which the 24-month figure is proposed. Far be it from me to offer political advice to the Government, but it would also do no harm to their political reputation north of the Tweed.

Mr. Gale: I fear that I have to take the hon. and learned Gentleman back a little. I was waiting for a natural break in his speech, but it did not happen; it has been a seamless speech. He referred to the allied rapid reaction corps and he read from an article in the *Financial Times* which seemed broadly to suggest that there was no cohesive European approach to defence. As the allied rapid reaction corps represents probably the epitome of what is regarded as modern response to modern needs, is the hon. and learned Gentleman seriously suggesting that the ARRC is not necessary? If he is not, it is surely right that it should be led by one of the best generals from the best Army in the world.

Mr. Campbell: The military academies in France might dispute the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's comments. If he is saying that, within a common foreign and security policy leading a common defence, to echo the words of the Maastricht treaty, there may be something approaching a rapid reaction corps, there is some substance in his view, but I argue that the British assumption of the responsibility of command has had the effect of substantially skewing the Army's shape for the foreseeable future.

When we are considering radical and long-lasting decisions, the continuing responsibility for that and the consequences for the British Army must be the subject of considerable review. I believe that there are military and political implications. It may be, for aught yet seen, that there is no military justification for that. However, there may be a political justification. If that is the case, we should have that debate so that we understand precisely why such a substantial part of our resources is being moved in that direction.

In the past 12 months, the Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence, who I am sure will endeavour to catch your eye later, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I had the opportunity to visit Northern Ireland and the former Yugoslavia and I want to say a word about each.

One of the things that struck me in Northern Ireland —I am not sure whether others have had the same experience—was the maturity of the relatively young men and women who were essentially in the front line of the Army's operations there. As one might expect, I was impressed by the quality of leadership of the senior officers. However, I was particularly impressed by the quality of leadership at non-commissioned officer level. Very frequently, the NCOs leading patrols on the street face the most difficult decisions which require judgment, maturity, common sense and good humour. We rely substantially upon those people. One of the features of my visit to Northern Ireland was that I came away lost in admiration at the quality of people whom we are still able to find to fulfil dangerous and demanding tasks of that kind.

The right hon. Member for Bridgwater was right to say that if there is a political settlement it will have consequences for the Army's commitments in Northern Ireland, though for my part I find it difficult to envisage circumstances in which there would not still be the resident battalions, but perhaps that is a discussion that we can have on another occasion. As the right hon. Member for Bridgwater rightly said, the consequence of a political settlement should not be the justification for yet another financial raid on the defence budget. Instead, it should be the means of providing greater flexibility on the emergency tour plot and, if necessary, of enabling us to meet further calls upon us, as a permanent member of the Security Council, to provide forces for United Nations operations.

In the meantime, I repeat a point which I believe will find some sympathy with the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Sir A. Hamilton). There is surely an extent to which some of the tasks currently carried out by the military in Northern Ireland could be undertaken by the civilian authorities without prejudicing security. That must

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be the determining factor. If steps could be taken in that direction, that could well have the consequence of creating greater flexibility.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces very properly drew attention to the fact that, while much is made of the quality of the infantry battalions in Bosnia, the quality of the logistical support is not often sufficiently recognised. Having visited Split with the Defence Select Committee, it was clear to me that a substantial part of the success that the infantry battalions have enjoyed has been due to the quality of that support. While we were in Split, we were told of a battalion, offered by a country whose anonymity I should preserve, which Brigadier Reith was unable to accept or to deploy because it came without support and, as a consequence, would have been not an advantage to his effort, but a disadvantage. The importance of support and the point at which support and the front line run together are clearly matters of considerable significance.

I welcome the fact that reserves will be deployed to the Falklands. If we argue that such deployment is a contribution to the overall defence of the United Kingdom, we must allow people of sufficient quality who are sufficiently well equipped and trained the opportunity to deploy in the kind of circumstances in which we might ask them to deploy if an emergency arose. I hope that the Government will take as many opportunities as possible, consistent with the civilian obligations of members of the reserves, to allow people that experience.

I understand that an effort is being made to extract something from the budget of the War Graves Commission. If that is true, I do not care much for the timing of the proposal, given that we are about to celebrate the 50th anniversary of D-day.

The two principal war grave cemeteries that I have visited are Arnhem and Alamein. There is no doubt that the quality of maintenance of those graves and cemeteries is remarkable to behold. One could argue with some justification that that is intrinsically right and proper. There is another more practical and perhaps less theoretical argument. When the friends and relations of those who died in battle visit those cemeteries, they derive some comfort from the fact that their sons and husbands and friends are still being properly looked after. I hope, therefore, that the Government will think very carefully before embarking on any argument about a reduction in the War Graves Commission budget which might be seen as cheeseparing and an insufficient reflection of the fact that in this year, of all years, there is a considerable sense among the citizens of the United Kingdom that many people gave their lives so that we could continue to enjoy our freedoms.

On these occasions, there is a ritual of congratulation in respect of our armed forces and, in particular, in respect of the Army. However, we should never forget that every day, somewhere, men—and, increasingly, women—in the Army are at risk of their lives. It is sometimes easy to forget that fact in our abstract discussions of concepts such as force structures and deterrence. If the risks run by those who serve are not constantly in our minds, they are surely constantly in the minds of their families—and those who serve are entitled to expect of us not just good wishes but sound judgment as well.

6.26 pm

Sir Archibald Hamilton (Epsom and Ewell): May I begin by declaring an interest in that I work as a consultant to Litton Industries which, among other things, makes navigation and guidance systems, and for Saladin, which is in the business of personal protection and security.

I pay tribute to the soldiers who serve in our Army across the world. We undoubtedly have the finest soldiers of any country today. They put themselves at very great risk and one is full of admiration for the discipline and very high professionalism that they demonstrate.

I want to refer to the defence cost studies which are now under way and about which we hope, as this was expressed earlier in the House, we will hear an announcement before we rise for the summer recess. I must confess that I was a rather doubting Thomas about those cost studies. It struck me that much too much money would have to be found. As the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) observed, we have tried to find savings before. I thought that it would be very difficult to find the quantities of money that were being talked about.

I am happy to say that I have probably been proved wrong and I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State on the way in which he has managed to get the services to work with him on what has amounted to a quite significant review of our support elements in the three armed services. He has managed to do that quite subtly. He is using their ideas. There is no doubt that an awful lot of the initiatives have come from the services themselves and that makes them that much more acceptable to the people who will ultimately be affected. He has also taken advantage of the fact—under the "Front Line First" measures—that the service boards have always been made up primarily of front line people. So there is not much affection for the support units but there is a great deal of affection for the fighting units, and if it comes to a choice the service boards will be more than happy to look stringently at what economies can be made in support areas to preserve front line units.

We have been over this ground before, and some of the old excuses are probably starting to slip away. One of the difficulties that we always used to face was the idea of transition to war, which was the reason given for keeping large numbers of men in uniform. The idea was that if we started thinking of going to war it would be possible to call up these men and to ensure that they came under military discipline if we entered a war zone—there would be no problem with people refusing to go. That problem can be finessed by changing the Reserve Forces Act 1980, and I sincerely hope that the Government will introduce legislation to that effect as soon as possible.

If the Act is updated, there is no reason why any civilian company performing the task of maintaining aircraft or tanks should not have a reserve liability. Then, if we went to war, these people could be called up and subjected to military discipline just as if they were in uniform all the time. That would be a significant step forward. The Gulf war showed the readiness of civilians to operate in support roles. The hon. Member for Motherwell, North need have no anxiety that tanks could not be maintained by civilians close to the front line, because their reserve liability would be invoked. That is a way around many problems.

In the past we faced enormous difficulties because the single service ethos often meant that people fought their own corners. I attempted to get the Royal Naval technical

college at Manadon moved to Shrivenham, so that all three services could undergo their technical training there. I encountered a certain resistance from the Navy, which explained to me that the move was not possible because people at Shrivenham all wore plain clothes and went around like civilians, whereas there was a great naval tradition that everyone should wear uniform.

I took the idea back to Shrivenham and asked what could be done about it. I was told, "No problem; we will ensure that everyone here wears uniform from now on." I went back and told the Navy, but the Navy said, "We must go away and think about this." In the end the Navy returned and agreed to Manadon being closed down but suggested that the alternative should be a technical course at Southampton university, where all naval trainees would be in plain clothes.

I should not have thought, either, that there was too much problem about bringing all the padres together. They could all be trained in the same place, surely. It is not too presumptuous to think that they all believe in the same God, although they may serve different arms of the forces.

The same can be said of doctors. I am greatly concerned about the costs associated with the military hospitals around the country—and they are even more expensive in Germany. A hard look should be taken at those costs. We do not need very many doctors to go off with our units abroad; we do need doctors if ever we go to war. So the whole idea of reserve doctors should be looked at carefully. I question whether we need the massive medical corps that we have in the Army and the number of military hospitals that go with it.

I am glad that it is proving possible to take a look at the staff colleges. In the past people felt strongly, in the single services, that they had to be preserved at whatever cost. The RAF never stops telling me about how unique Bracknell was, although there was no shortage of money men to remind us of the development potential of the significant number of acres in Berkshire on which it sat. I hope that the Government will carefully consider consolidating the staff colleges in one place. Admittedly, Greenwich presents a maintenance problem; it has so many preserved and listed buildings. But perhaps it can be moved to some other Department.

There are rumours in the newspapers, which I have no reason to disbelieve, to the effect that a close look is being taken at the support elements of the RAF. I should like to enter a caveat as follows: if they are civilianised—I am sure that there will be opportunities for that—the MOD should not allow a monopoly to a civilian supplier so that it becomes difficult to conduct subsequent competition for the work. It is most important that the work be put out to tender again in a few years' time, and that there should still be a viable competition for it.

Mr. Brazier: May I put an allied point to my right hon. Friend? When we consider contractorising military functions, with sponsored military units, both for that reason and because of the lack of surge capability in civilian industry, is it not essential that units should not be sponsored by the very defence suppliers who supply their equipment? That could lead to a monopoly in peace time, exercised by a supplier which, in time of war, will be exceptionally busy producing spare parts and so on.

Sir Archibald Hamilton: That is certainly a viable point: there is probably a case for splitting the two functions. What is important is maintaining competitiveness so that there can always be competitive tenders.

I recall the fact that, for a very long time, there were serious problems for the MOD over agreeing about the training of dogs. The RAF maintained that its dogs had to be trained completely differently from Army dogs—it was impossible to bring them under the same roof. I gather that an agency deals with the training of dogs now, so it is highly likely that they will all be trained together at last. It just goes to show what problems there can be.

I must tell those who talk of bringing back the Rhine Army that, although there are theoretically enormous savings to be made, we must face up to the fact that there is not a great surplus of barracks in this country. A massive building programme to house the Rhine Army in the United Kingdom would render any savings illusory for a long time to come, while the capital costs of rehousing the men were absorbed.

I must also tell the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) that there are 300 tanks in the Rhine Army. I am not sure how their return would fit in with the environmental concerns of the Liberals. If they trained in Britain, they might cause a certain amount of difficulty. *[Interruption.]* Perhaps Fife is the place to put them. I have always taken the view that there are large areas of Scotland where more training could be done.

We have to accept that a third world war is becoming much less likely. Most of NATO's structure and organisation was based on the idea that we might be pitched back into a massive European war—our support structures certainly reflected that possibility. Now, warning times are very much longer, and we cannot dismiss what is happening in Russia either. Today no one believes that Russia's economy will allow it to rebuild its armed forces to the point where they threaten our security—at least, not for a long time to come. It is thus possible to take some risks with the amount of support that we keep, and it is right to examine it in a draconian way, as the Government are doing.

It seems to me likely that savings will be found, and that is extremely encouraging. Let us ensure that they are ploughed back into better equipment and into all the things that lead to "smaller but better", just as my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) has always advocated. We must accept that the role of our armed forces is changing, and that there is a much greater emphasis on peacekeeping. When we consider what role we should be playing in other parts of the world, we must never forget that we have a massive peacekeeping commitment in Northern Ireland which, I think, is standing at some 18,000 troops.

I was unhappy when the decision was made in 1992 to send two extra battalions to Northern Ireland. The reason for that has been well rehearsed. Those were two enroulement battalions, so we were not just talking about another two battalions, but about eight to 10 battalions which are needed to support them. I do not know whether my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement will have an opportunity to give an answer when he sums up, but does he have any statistics in terms of terrorist incidents or what has happened in Northern Ireland which prove that those two extra battalions have achieved anything in military terms?

[Sir Archibald Hamilton]

I have yet to meet any general who does not want more troops for whatever it is that he happens to be doing, but it is important that we weigh up the effectiveness of those troops. They are not just a free and easy option. As my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces made clear, we may—if we are lucky with our existing commitments—get to a two-year interval between tours. On the other hand, if there is the slightest change and extra commitments are taken on, we will not get to the 24-month interval. The whole situation is being held tightly.

I was glad to hear that the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East backs my view that we should be looking strongly at the civilianisation of a number of jobs which are taken on by the military in Northern Ireland. One classic example is the Maze prison, where an extremely boring guarding job must be done which could easily be done by locals recruited in Northern Ireland where unemployment is astronomically high.

I must tell the hon. and learned Member that it will never happen as long as the job is carried out on the defence budget, as it is at the moment. I cannot see the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland volunteering to take the cost of hiring people locally on to his budget, and that is one of the great difficulties. I have been laughed out of court in the past by saying that the whole of our Northern Ireland commitment should come on to the Northern Ireland budget, and should not be part of the defence budget. There would then be some financial incentive for the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to look at a reduction in the number of troops. The Secretary of State wastes no time in ganging up with the GOC in Northern Ireland and demanding more troops and, if he gets them, he knows that they will not cost him anything because they will not come out of his budget.

That leads one to Bosnia, where once again there are two enroulement battalions. My hon. Friend the Minister for the Armed Forces said that there is every intention of getting one of those battalions back. I was glad to hear that, but I have a great suspicion that in years to come we will still have at least two battalions in Bosnia. One knows the nature of the UN—it is extremely easy to put troops into those areas, but it is very difficult to get them out.

Once again, those are enroulement battalions, so it is not just a question of the two battalions but eight to 10 battalions which are needed to support them. We want flexibility to carry out any tasks relating to peacekeeping or the defence of our interests anywhere in the world, but that flexibility does not exist today. Therefore, we must look hard at our commitments.

I would like to pay great tribute to General Sir Michael Rose for doing absolutely miraculous things with very limited resources in Bosnia, and he has shown enormous courage and resourcefulness. However, I do not think that it would have made any difference to Gorazde if, instead of the maximum of 150 UN troops which were there, there had been 1,500 UN troops. The fact remains that the Serbs had every intention of taking that town back.

We must not believe that there is some magic number of troops which we can put into Bosnia which will stop the Serbs from doing what they want. The great problem is that those who know absolutely nothing about defence, both in the House and particularly in the media, are the ones who tell us that there is a military solution to the problems of Bosnia.

Mr. Duncan Smith: My right hon. Friend has touched on an extremely important issue. During the Gorazde affair, there was a garrison of Bosnian Muslim soldiers in the town who were constantly making forays. Not once was that reported, as far as I could see, in the press. Does not that demonstrate that the situation is much more complex than is so often touted both here and in the press?

Sir Archibald Hamilton: I agree absolutely with my hon. Friend. The press has a great responsibility in this, and there has been enormous pressure for us to deploy troops in Bosnia. I do not think that anybody could know what the final outcome of that would be. I find it worrying that there are still people talking in terms of a massive deployment of troops, as if somehow there was a military solution to the problems.

There is a direct comparison with the 500,000 American troops who were put into a not totally dissimilar situation in Vietnam. There was a civil war, and the troops incurred enormous casualties, got nowhere and had to come back totally defeated. Exactly the same thing happened to similar numbers of Russian troops in Afghanistan. We must learn that we cannot impose solutions on countries which are at war.

We also must accept something which is extremely unpalatable, and it is not something that one wants to say. However, the fact is that since we went into Bosnia we have fed some starving people, but we have also fed the fighting forces in Bosnia. We have kept soldiers alive, and they have been able to continue the fighting. If we had deprived them of food, maybe the whole conflict would have come to an end quicker and maybe fewer people would have died. We may have prolonged the conflict and made it worse.

There are people who say that we should use NATO or lose it. I think that that is the most incredible nonsensical rubbish that I have ever heard. The fact is that NATO has never been used—thank God it has not—but it has acted as an effective deterrent and has maintained peace in Europe for a long time. If we were move to the opposite scenario which some are suggesting of a massive deployment of NATO troops in Bosnia, one can imagine what would happen if serious casualties were incurred there.

What would happen to the NATO alliance? There are many partners in NATO who are not in the business of having large numbers of casualties and bodies coming home because of their involvement in a civil war somewhere in Europe which in no way threatens their security. If we were not careful, the NATO alliance could disintegrate if those troops were deployed.

I hope for heaven's sake that we avoid massive deployments. I have every sympathy for President Clinton who is showing reluctance to get American troops involved on the ground, and we must be wary before we become more involved than we are today. I hope that we do not have to see a ghastly accident involving the deaths of a large number of our service men before the decision will be taken to withdraw.

Dr. David Clark: I wish to associate the Opposition with the right hon. Gentleman's comments on and tributes to General Rose. Will he join me in paying tribute to Brigadier John Reith, the commander of BRITFOR, who is

just retiring, for his magnificent work—far beyond his military role—in banging together the heads of the Bosnian Government and the Croats to get peace in central Bosnia? Now, 1.6 million of the population live in relative peace. I believe that he has done a brilliant job there as the commander of BRITFOR. Will the right hon. Gentleman join me in that?

Sir Archibald Hamilton: Of course, and I also pay tribute to the diplomatic efforts which have gone into ensuring that that peace is maintained. We must do everything possible to ensure that the Serbs eventually agree to some form of peace also. However, that seems regrettably to be some way off.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): The right hon. Gentleman has made clear his view that European and British forces should not be involved in trying to impose peace in Bosnia. Does he therefore agree with those who advocate the lifting of the arms embargo so that, at the very least, the people of Bosnia can defend themselves? If we will not defend them, surely they have the right to defend themselves.

Sir Archibald Hamilton: The arms embargo makes total sense so long as there are UN troops on the ground. If UN troops were withdrawn, there would be little justification for maintaining an arms embargo against one of the factions in Bosnia, bearing in mind that the Croat and Serb elements have less problem in obtaining arms.

One should not imagine that there is some simple solution to the problem in Bosnia. If the Muslims were to be supplied with arms, the arms would have to come through Croatia. There are certain logistic problems in getting in any more heavy armaments than can be brought in by aircraft.

Let us deal with the question of a review. It is a little facile to believe that some wonderful review could be carried out which would identify all the future threats to the United Kingdom, tell us in what wars we would be involved in the future and allowed us to plan the armed forces as a result. Of course, we carried out the Nott review, which somewhat emasculated the Navy. The next thing we knew, we were involved in the Falklands war, which no one had foretold. If we are to rely on defence intelligence to tell us where the next war will come from, let us remember that it got the Falklands wrong and the Gulf war wrong. People swore that Saddam Hussein would never invade Kuwait.

I do not know on what premise we are to work out where the next war will come from, so it seems sensible, in broad terms, to keep a wide range of technologies and capabilities that one might need in any sphere of life. The only way in which we would undermine that position is by being drawn into more and more peacekeeping activities around the world. My right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater alluded to that. If we did so, there would not be any more money for the defence budget. We would end up with a larger and larger lightly armed Army and we would sacrifice the Navy and the Royal Air Force to pay for it. We would also sacrifice the Army's capability to fight high-intensity conflicts. If we did that, we should ultimately undermine the defence capability of the United Kingdom. That is something that we should not entertain, whatever happens.

I pay tribute to our Army and our soldiers. I know that they want to be a professional, superbly equipped force. They do not want to incur casualties all round the world peacekeeping in areas where little can be done.

6.51 pm

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): I begin with a constituency point. I do so without apology because, as both the Secretary of State and the Ministers are aware, the Royal Artillery range at Benbecula in my constituency is of vital economic and social importance to the southern isles in terms of the work that it generates for the local population and in wider general terms—the income that it brings into the islands.

The Secretary of State knows that I have made representations over the past months about the future of the artillery range at Benbecula. Concerns continue to be expressed, particularly in the present climate of talk of swingeing cuts in the defence budget which will affect bases up and down the country.

I shall not rehearse the arguments that I have already put to the Ministry of Defence and the Government about the economic and social importance of the range. I merely make the point that in my seven years as a Member of Parliament, I have never once had to approach any Defence Minister with any complaint from my constituents about the range at Benbecula.

The relationship between the range and the people of the southern isles is excellent. It has always been extremely good. It is a tribute to that relationship and to the people who work at the range that never in seven years have I had to take a complaint to the Minister from a constituent about any individual or anything that has happened at the range.

The same is true of the recent large-scale exercise at Lewis involving the Royal Marines. The exercise normally takes place each year in Norway, but, because of the winter Olympics this year, it had to take place in the United Kingdom. The location chosen was in my constituency. Thousands of soldiers made amphibious exercise landings near Stornoway. I have not received one complaint from my constituents about the scale of the exercise or the behaviour of the soldiers. I pay tribute to the Royal Artillery and the Royal Marines in both respects. It is my hope that, at the end of the extensive accounts exercise that the Government are undertaking, the relationship that has been established over past decades will continue for an equal period of time to come.

I shall not rehearse the arguments about the merits of the Royal Artillery range from a defence point of view. As the Ministers and the Secretary of State know, the deep range is a unique facility which cannot be duplicated anywhere in the United Kingdom or, indeed, in Europe. I also emphasise that the short range, which provides the bread and butter of the work of the range, cannot easily be added on to ranges elsewhere in the United Kingdom. It provides a specific type of training and practice for the teams who train there. Such single-purpose training facilities are vital. I know that the Royal Artillery wants it to be retained. I hope that the Ministers who make the decision will listen to the voices of those in the Royal Artillery.

Although I appreciate that the Ministers involved have to make some tough choices in the months to come about where expenditure can be deployed most effectively from an overall defence point of view, an essential element in such ministerial decision making is the thought that, wherever possible and everything else being equal, defence

[Mr. Calum Macdonald]

spending should be directed to regions of the country that face serious economic difficulties and have high unemployment rather than to regions that do not face such deep-seated economic structural problems.

The Government can use defence expenditure to achieve two goals. One is the immediate goal of defence value for money. The other goal, given that the expenditure will take place in any case, is to bolster the regions that are economically depressed. If the Government can marry those two objectives—I believe that it is possible—they will genuinely achieve value for money. I hope that that perspective informs the thinking of Ministers and the Secretary of State when they come to take their important decisions.

A wider theme appears in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1994". I am struck by the references in the statement to the European dimension. It has not crept into the debates thus far. None of the speeches that we have heard from Conservative Members touched on it.

The European dimension is becoming more and more apparent in defence thinking. The "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1994" contains striking paragraphs and phrases which would have been inconceivable a few years ago. For example, on page 15 of the paper in a section entitled "The European Union", paragraph 210 states:

"We have declared . . . our intention to contribute to work towards a common European defence policy which may, in time, lead the European Union to a common defence."

I know that such aspirations are expressed in the Maastricht treaty, but I am pleased that the Government have seen fit to include that phrase in the statement. A major change has occurred in Government thinking in the past few years and I welcome it.

Another reason why we need to think along these lines is given on page 11 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates". Paragraph 207 states:

"The Combined Joint Task Forces"—

which were broached at the last North Atlantic Treaty Organisation summit—

"will be able to operate under the control of the Western European Union"—

not just under the control of NATO—

"in circumstances where the European NATO nations perceive a need for action but the United States and Canada, for whatever reason, do not wish to be involved."

That is very important recognition of a problem which has arisen in the former Yugoslavia, and I believe that we are likely to see it elsewhere in Europe beyond NATO's immediate area of operations in the years to come.

I warmly welcome the Government's recognition that there will be circumstances when members of the Western European Union will need to work together without the immediate direct assistance of the United States or Canada in the form of ground troops. I hope that they will provide assistance in other forms, such as logistical intelligence and so on. We will need to operate outside NATO's immediate area of operations in order to achieve objectives which are important to European interests, but which may not be important to the United States or Canada.

I believe that the statement will be seen as a seminal statement, as it recognises the necessary European dimension in British defence thinking. Given the sentiments expressed in the statement, I regret that the Minister did not refer to the European dimension in his speech, although he talked about many other topics. This is an absolutely crucial issue because it is a fundamental perspective which conditions all other thinking. I hope that the Minister who is to reply to the debate will address it.

The statement refers to how various European countries will work on the European dimension through the combined joint task forces and through the WEU planning cell, which is now up and running. Page 16 of the statement says:

"The WEU Planning Cell . . . is drawing up lists of forces which could be made available by nations to the WEU for operations on a case-by-case basis."

I do not find the last point encouraging. I do not think that we should bring together forces on a case-by-case basis, but should seriously try to develop, in an integrated way, European defence capability which will be able to respond to a broad variety of situations.

The United Nations has had difficulty in responding to the crisis in Yugoslavia in an ad hoc way. When a crisis occurs it tries to pull together the forces it needs to respond to that crisis. Likewise, I think that that is one of the lessons that we learnt from the Gulf war. Because of a lack of anticipation and thinking about developing a combined European force, there was a last-minute scramble to put together the forces necessary at the time of that war. Some countries, such as France, were plainly not adequately prepared for such a deployment.

I urge the Government to talk to our partners in the Western European Union and begin to organise more systematically the planning of European defence capability. Future generations will be astonished to learn that each member of the European Union undertook major cuts in its armed forces, while subscribing to the notion of a common defence capability. European Union members are making defence cuts in isolation; there does not seem to be any co-ordination of the cuts which they are implementing.

In the current climate, it would surely make sense for European Union countries to sit down and plan together the kinds and shape of forces that they will need to meet future emergencies. We do not need just a British defence review; we need a European defence review. A review of British defence made in isolation is inadequate, given our commitments in the Maastricht treaty and the challenges that we are likely to face.

I welcome the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) about the situation in Rwanda, which has been largely ignored by the media in the past few weeks. Carnage has occurred in Rwanda on an horrendous scale and it should concern us deeply. I welcome particularly what my hon. Friend said about the need for the United Nations and the Organisation of African Unity to get together to consider the urgent deployment of military forces to Rwanda to try to stop the slaughter in that country.

Obviously, we need there, and shall need in similar situations in the future, not only peacekeeping, but peacemaking. It is also clear, as my hon. Friend implied, that when that type of crisis occurs in different regions of the world, although there must be a UN dimension and a UN authorisation of international action, we should look to those countries most closely involved—the countries in the region—to be in the front line in resolving the problem.

I believe that the same is true in Bosnia, which is for Europeans as Rwanda is for African countries. We, and especially my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North, are willing to call on African states to intervene

militarily to stop the slaughter in Rwanda. We should be equally willing to call on European states to intervene to stop the slaughter in Bosnia. The moral imperative is obviously the same, the interests of the international community are the same, but the interests of those countries bordering the trouble spots are obviously much greater than the interests of countries at a large distance from them.

Therefore, I believe that Bosnia must be regarded as primarily a European responsibility, and that in the future we shall need to develop a European defence capability to intervene in places such as Bosnia much more effectively than we have been able to on this occasion.

7.11 pm

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): When I look back on my military service, I count myself fortunate to have served at a time when there was always an identifiable enemy and we usually knew what we were about and the dangers that we were walking into. That is why I should like to echo all the tributes that have been paid to our service men today.

Going into action, seeing the enemy in front of one, is quite a different matter from going out on the streets of Belfast or going down those roads in Bosnia, and many other places where our service men are now committed. They never know how long they will be there. What is more, they are under restraints under which only an Army of the quality of ours would possibly operate. No other army in the world would behave as well as our Army has behaved, and suffer the casualties that we have suffered over the years, yet hold back from action which many of its members, I know, from time to time would wish to take.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) has made it clear over the years that change was inevitable. I do not think that anyone in the House would not accept that it is time for change, against the background of the events that have taken place in the Soviet Union, or what was the Soviet Union, in the past five years.

No one can defend the need for an army or armed forces at the level at which they were required before the collapse of the Soviet Union, which was followed by the splintering of its armed forces and, in my view, by an almost total collapse of its morale. I would not wish to be engaged in the Russian army today, against the background of what has happened to those armed forces over the years.

I have a fairly long memory in the House. I sit here through every defence debate. I watch, and I have listened to what has been said from the Opposition Benches over the years. Throughout the cold war period, when this country and the NATO alliance were under threat from the Soviet Union, we never heard anything from the Opposition parties in the House except the need to cut our defence forces. Most hon. Members on the Opposition Benches—only five are present tonight—know that, throughout that time, they were being led by people who supported CND and its aims and objectives.

I am very sorry that the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) has left the Chamber, because I should especially like to draw attention to the role that the present leader of his party played in 1985 when he turned the Liberal party, against the wishes of then leader, the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) and, I am quite sure, the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East, against the deployment of cruise missiles in this country at a crucial time when the future of the country hung in the balance. Let us never forget what was done by the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) at that time and the damage that it did to the credibility of his party.

Therefore, we should take no talk from Opposition Members about what they want to do and the way in which they would maintain our armed forces. This is our debate because through those dark years we kept our armed forces intact against the attacks that were being made on them by Opposition Members.

We all know that change and cuts are inevitable, but they must be soundly based and in line with long-term strategic priorities, not based on annual Treasury demands. I am anxious that decisions may not be taken quickly enough—that there may be a blurring of "Options for Change" into putting the "Front Line First", without the right action being taken quickly and rationally.

Probably the most unhappy time that I spent in the Army was in the canal zone from 1951 to 1954. We had thousands of service men locked into that canal zone and they were all in a no-win situation. The result was inevitable. Hundreds, possibly thousands, of them—always the best—junior officers and NCOs, said, "Enough is enough; I am off." They left the Army in droves at that time and it took us many years to make good the loss of that hard core of people who were the best in our armed forces.

I have to say to the Secretary of State that morale was brittle then and it is brittle now. Once again, many of our brightest and best feel insecure and they—the ones whom we can least afford to lose—will always bail out first. So my first message to the Secretary of State is to ask him please, please, please to end the uncertainty as soon as possible, live up to the slogan that he has rightly put before us, "Front Line First", and ensure that our Army, and especially its leaders at all levels, regains its confidence and morale. Uncertainty about the future destroys morale most, and that is the anxiety that I have now.

That means more than providing a good and worthwhile career structure. It means ensuring that the best Army in the world has the best equipment in the world, is not starved of proper training, and has ammunition and spare parts always available. In pursuit of that, radical changes can, and should, be considered.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Sir A. Hamilton) made an argument about the difficulty of bringing back the Army from Germany because of the cost of finding barrack accommodation here, but I would say that the same does not always apply with the Royal Air Force. Air stations here are being vacated by the United States air force and our air force as they retrench, and I cannot think of any reason why we should not redeploy the RAF stations, or some of them, back here, leaving only an essential small element in Germany. Why do we need the RAF in Germany now, when even the most likely potential armed forces lie about 760 miles to the east of the German border? We have airfields being mothballed or decommissioned, so why not bring them home?

I was delighted to hear that the Devon and Dorsets are to go to Poland. We could not have a finer regiment making initial contact with the Poles. I hope that this is the forerunner of trainee exercises in Poland. I do not see why much of our training should not be translated to that country, with its marvellous training grounds, which I know it would love us to use following their vacation by the Soviet army. I imagine that they are in a pretty messy

[Sir Jim Spicer]

state and that a hell of a lot of cleaning up would have to be done. A good deal of money could be saved, however, and we would be welcoming back on board our allies of the last war. I know that they would welcome our being there.

No one can predict where our Army will be called on to serve in the future. However, we can say with absolute certainty that any conflict will be based on this principle: "Come as you are, not as you would like to be." Never again will there be a situation of slow build-up in which we can mobilise. In future, when there is action anywhere in the world we shall have to go as we are. Thus, we need balanced forces, properly trained and equipped— not for a slogging match over years but for rapid deployment anywhere in the world. Many hon. Members have already said that, to that end, we need air mobility, rapid deployment capability and the right sort of air support. These are essential ingredients of such a British Army.

I end as the Secretary of State and, in particular, the Minister of State for Defence Procurement would expect me to—with a plea about equipment. First, will Ministers please get on with ordering some attack helicopters now? We need them desperately. Secondly, will they press ahead with a firm order for the utility EH101 to replace the totally inadequate support helicopter force?

The current helicopters were all designed in the 1950s or the 1960s. It is quite frightful that, with our capability and with the best Army in the world, we should still rely on helicopters that were designed in the 1950s or the 1960s and are really not up to the job. I realise that an order is on the way. It is grinding forward, and the Minister of State will want to push it as much as possible. Let him give it a little extra shove and, in particular, make sure that it goes to Westland.

I have great confidence in the Secretary of State and his team. On many occasions, I have pulled my right hon. and learned Friend's leg about what a joy it is for serving personnel and ex-service men to have at the Ministry someone who does not pretend to be a military man. He brings a clear mind to the job, and he and his team are the best people to build up the Army that we need in the 1990s and beyond.

7.22 pm

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): I welcome the return of the SDE programme to its proper timetable. It is very good to have the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1994" before us. I welcome the fact that the programme is back on schedule, and I hope that this will apply to future reports.

What we have this year is, of course, something of an interim report, as we are waiting for the results of the defence costs study, which I hope will be before the House early in July. What is presented to us will be the result of the work of 33 study groups, which I understand have already reported to my hon. Friend the Minister of State, and of some 5,000 extra recommendations from within the services and the Ministry of Defence.

Sieving through those recommendations, adopting the sensible ones and rejecting the bad ones, is a mammoth task, and I wish my right hon. and learned Friend and his ministerial colleagues well in their decisions. I shall not try to anticipate the conclusions of the study groups, but I want to make some general points.

First, with regard to "Front Line First", it is essential that the front line be extended behind. It must not be merely a thin red line, with no support and no replacements. My hon. Friend has already acknowledged the truth of this assertion, but the Select Committee on Defence will be looking very closely at the way in which it is put into effect when the defence costs study groups' recommendations are put to the House.

As I have said, I hope that this will happen in July. I have written to my right hon. and learned Friend to remind him that the Select Committee on Defence will sit during the recess if necessary. I hope that my reminder will help the timing of the report's production in such a way that it will not be necessary for us to do so. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend and his colleagues have taken well on board the underlying message of my letter.

I do not intend to reiterate the many points that have already been made. However, I shall try to add to them and, in the case of some, express thorough disagreement.

The hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr Reid) is very keen that there should be a defence review. I have told the hon. Gentleman that the current Select Committee on Defence has never recommended such a review and that it will never do so. That will certainly be the case so long as I am Chairman. The hon. Gentleman will know that the Committee has an admirable record for unanimous reports. We do not air our disagreements in public, and I think that I can guarantee that the Committee will not recommend a defence review.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) and other hon. Members have said, certainty and continuity are very important to our armed forces at present. One reason for the low morale is that we have had so many changes over such a short time.

A defence review at this time would increase and prolong uncertainty. It is unthinkable that such a review could report within 18 months. It would simply elongate the uncertainty suffered by our troops and other service men.

If the hon. Gentleman has not already done so, he ought to read the paper on defence reviews that is obtainable in the Library. That shows in great detail the shortcomings of all the defence reviews of the past, and illustrates very nicely a point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Sir A. Hamilton)—that defence reviews are wildly inaccurate and do not help forward planning of defence structures.

Dr. Reid: I have read the paper to which the hon. Gentleman refers, as he recommended during our last debate on the subject. The fact that we have always got it wrong in the past should not prevent us from trying again. *[Laughter.]* When I said "we", I was being generous; I should have said "they". I do not claim that we can predict everything, but that does not mean that we should not make an intelligent attempt to analyse what might happen.

This is not a question for polarisation. I believe that all hon. Members share the hon. Gentleman's concern about the uncertainty and the undermining of morale caused by the continual process of piecemeal review. I understand why the hon. Gentleman, like service men and women, does not want another 18 months of this. However, there will have to be a review. Eighteen months will be added either at the end of this period or in two or three years' time. There is no way out of that.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: That was a rather long intervention. Sometimes, a period of 18 months seems quite short. The hon. Gentleman was wrong to correct himself for having said "we". His "we" was perfectly correct. However, I do not want to get dragged further into a debate on the question of a defence review. My opinion is that, at the moment, such a review would be very damaging to the morale of the forces. In any event, I do not accept that it would assist us in our forward planning.

I should like now to deal with some general points arising from SDE94. I very much welcome the reiteration of the division of the role of the armed forces into three separate categories. This first occurred in the last review. The armed forces' first task is to protect the security of this country and that of our allies when there is no major threat. Their second task is to protect us when there is such a major external threat; and their third task is to represent this country's wider security interests through the maintenance of peace and security internationally. I wish briefly to consider whether our current forces can fulfil those three tasks, or whether a shortfall needs to be addressed.

On the major external threat, I profoundly disagree with both my right hon. Friends the Members for Bridgwater (Mr. King) and for Epsom and Ewell (Sir A. Hamilton), who were the architects of "Options for Change". I opposed that move, because I felt that it was wrong to assess the threat from the former Soviet Union as diminished by the changes that occurred there. I now believe that my fears were fully justified.

The Select Committee on Defence is currently undertaking a study of the role and strength of NATO and where it should go in the future. I shall not try to pre-empt what the Committee's report might say, but in the course of that study we have met leading defence experts and politicians, particularly Defence and Foreign Ministers, from most of the countries that border Russia—Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, the Baltic states and Georgia—and we shall shortly visit Russia and the Ukraine. Everything that I have seen and heard so far leads me to conclude that this world is much more dangerous than it was five or six years ago.

We cannot discount the threat from Russia just because its current leadership is benign and the strength of its forces has been run down. A brief look at SDE94, which compares the level of equipment and resources still available to Russia today with what is available in the west, shows that, whatever the rundown may have been, we still have a formidable potential enemy that is equipped in such a way that Europe could not resist it, were the threat to be renewed. Mr. Zhirinovsky may or may not come to power in Russia; but if he does not, some potential dictator may do so.

As an hon. Member has already said, the Russian economy is extremely weak, but it was concluded that that lessened the risk of Russia becoming aggressive again. My conclusion is that Russia's economic weakness is a real reason why we should fear her most greatly.

Mr. Gill: When my hon. Friend's Committee studies those matters, will it look at how the network of interlocking bilateral treaties signed between Russia and western Europe constrains the defence capabilities of individual and independent states of western Europe?

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that suggestion. He has already drawn my attention to the treaty between Russia and Spain. He is right. The Russians are diplomatically trying to network bilateral treaties in order to undermine western security, which is another reason why we should fear their long-term intent.

Sir Archibald Hamilton: Does my hon. Friend accept that a main component of the deterrence provided by NATO that stopped the Soviet Union invading western Europe was nuclear weapons? Given that we still have nuclear weapons today, why should not that deterrence be as effective tomorrow as it has been in the past?

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: Because there is now an area of total uncertainty that did not exist in the past. So long as there was a stand off between the west and the east with no middle ground over which we were likely to fight, the nuclear deterrent, backed up by a substantial conventional capability, was adequate. If Russia were to fall into the wrong hands, I fear that she would not be content merely to reconstruct the old Russian empire of the Ukraine, Byelorussia, Georgia and the Baltic states, but would look again at the "near abroad"—Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

If Russia does that, it will be for the west to decide whether to go to war to defend those countries. I do not know what the future holds, but, given the instability of central Europe and the fact that it is now open for them or us to compete over, the position is infinitely more dangerous than during the cold war.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: I intrude on the speech of the Chairman of the Select Committee, of which I am a member, with all due deference. He seems to argue that treaties between western countries and Russia were destabilising. What, then, is his response to "partnership for peace", which we understand the Russians are willing to sign?

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: "Partnership for peace" is a treaty between the west collectively and individual eastern states. The idea is to have a partnership of defensive alliance. The difference between the partners is that the west does not intend to attack eastward. But if that position is reversed and an aggressive Russia attacks westwards, and alliances prevent a western European country from acting against Russia in such circumstances, that would be a much more dangerous position. The Defence Select Committee should look at that matter, and I reserve my final judgment on the treaties until we study them in detail.

Sir Archibald Hamilton: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I am sorry, but I must move on, as I know that many other hon. Members wish to speak. Perhaps we can debate the matter later outside the Chamber—*[Interruption.]*—over a drink, not in a boxing ring.

NATO must remain the linchpin of western strength. For the foreseeable future, this country must look to NATO for our security in terms of major external threats. Many matters flow from that, including our presence in Germany, which is an important part of our commitment to NATO and of maintaining America's commitment to NATO, and many other ways in which we become involved in

[Sir Nicholas Bonsor]

defensive alliance action, such as Bosnia. Were those matters left entirely to our national Governments, we might not necessarily wish to become so involved.

On protection and security when no major threat exists, we have already heard a great deal about Northern Ireland. The fact that I do not propose to add to what has been said on that topic does not reflect my view of its importance. I endorse what has been said. It is unlikely that we shall be able to reduce the strength of our forces in Northern Ireland in the near future, except perhaps in marginal areas where we could safely hand over jobs currently done by military personnel to civilian or Northern Irish personnel. We cannot, however, substantially reduce the number of troops currently deployed there, which stands at 19,000.

On the Army's peacetime use, the main weakness is in our training schedules. I hope that that weakness is temporary. It is the result of emergency tour plots that are very close to each other, so that our troops can never train at brigade, divisional or substantial strength level because somebody is always busy doing something else. When my hon. Friend the Minister for Defence Procurement winds up, will he say something about our plans to send troops to BATUS for training in the near future? I seek his assurance that we shall be able fully to use the UK's allocation of time in that training area.

Will my hon. Friend also say something about an exercise called First Crusade, which took place in March? I hope that it was more successful than the exercise after which it is named. It was supposed to be at brigade strength, but there was a substantial shortage of infantry. The 1st Duke of Wellington unit, which had been allocated to that exercise, was not there because it was in Bosnia, and there was a shortage of both Saxon and tank regiments because of other operational duties which they were either engaged in or training for.

Will my hon. Friend assure us that, in future, brigade-strength exercises will be planned as part of our regular training exercises, so that we do not reach the stage where we can operate only in small groups, and lose the vital cohesion that gives our Army such potential strength in times of substantial conflict?

The third heading is the wider security interests, about which I have spoken before, so I can be brief. I am profoundly concerned that Her Majesty's Government do not seem fully to deploy the great ability of our troops in the national interest on the wider scale. Our presence abroad is not given the value that it has outside purely security reasons. When we deploy troops, trade and goods will follow, and our international diplomatic relationships are tighter and closer. The way in which we exercise and deploy our troops should be considered on a much wider basis than merely whether there is an immediate defence need or an immediate training benefit from their presence.

We have deployed troops in many cases, particularly in Nepal when we helped with the hurricane, and in Guatemala, when we helped with a natural disaster, in both cases earning substantial good will.

However, the withdrawal from Belize was wholly wrong, taking it on the broad base of national interest. On page 40 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1994" the Government report on the excellent anti-drug work done in that region by the West Indies guard ship. I am glad that there is no current intention to remove that ship from station, as it would be disastrous for our presence in the West Indies and that part of central America.

But the troops on the ground could also have a useful role in anti-drug operations. More importantly, they have become vital again for the security of Belize itself. The justification in the defence estimates for the removal of the troops would be described by my—I almost said right hon. Friend—ex-right hon. Friend Alan Clark as being economical with the actualité.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): We all knew what he meant—not telling the truth.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: There is a lot about a bit of the truth and all of the truth.

Page 48 of the defence estimates says:

"At the request and with the agreement of the Belize Government, the British military presence in Belize will take the form of a jungle training operation for troops from the United Kingdom."

On the face of it, that is not untrue. The Belize Government did ask for, or did agree to, the removal of British troops. But the Belize Government were then replaced in an election and the new Belize Government asked us please to stay, to which the answer was no. At the same time, there was a revolution in Guatemala, just as the Government were announcing what a wonderfully safe place Guatemala had become. Ever since, there has been an increasing threat to Belize from the Guatemalans.

The outrageous conduct of the Greeks, backed by the Guatemalans, to the high commissioner of Belize during the conference over Easter in Greece was something about which I hope Her Majesty's Government made a vigorous protest, not least as the high commissioner for Belize also happens to be a viscountess in Britain. The insult to this country and to Belize was intolerable, particularly from a country currently purporting to be President of the European Union.

I deeply resent what happened to the high commissioner at that conference. We shall be making a grave error if we fail to give backing to the Belizean Government and to the security of Belize. The Guatemalans are becoming more and more aggressive. There is a settlement within Belize of Guatemalan citizens which the Belizeans cannot currently get rid of, and the situation out there is looking increasingly bleak.

The response of Her Majesty's Government, again on page 48 of the defence estimates, is to say that the Belizean Government

"have been assured that the British Government is fully prepared to play its part in consultations which would lead to the appropriate response should the security of Belize be threatened in future."

Frankly, if the Guatemalan forces invaded Belize, we would not have time to call an international conference to see what the appropriate response would be.

We are in grave danger of repeating the error we made in the Falklands, of showing an apparent weakness where, in the event, there would be strength. I have no desire to see British forces sent to Belize in order to defend it, but I would rather see that than see Britain's name in the mud for having betrayed yet another of our friends.

I hope that Her Majesty's Government will review the way in which they approach the whole Belizean issue and, if they do nothing else, at least ensure that there is in place,

not in future as a dream, an alliance which would guarantee the security of Belize against any aggression from Guatemala or any other neighbour.

There are other examples of our withdrawing when we should not be. We have taken the platoon from South Korea. There cannot be any great defence saving in removing a platoon from South Korea, but the Americans, to whom I spoke, deeply resented the symbolism of the withdrawal of support that we were giving to the American effort in South Korea.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will not need reminding that the position in North Korea is becoming increasingly hazardous, and the whole of that area is looking dangerous. I accept that a platoon, even of our splendid British soldiers, will not make an enormous difference to the defence of South Korea if invaded, but it is a symbol of the backing we give the United States in that part of the world and, as such, I believe it to be valuable.

We have also withdrawn prematurely from Hong Kong. In the same way, we are sending signals of weakness when there is no need to be weak, and we are withdrawing our troops when their presence there would be a continual reminder of Britain's determination to stand up for the rights of the Hong Kong people up to 1997 and, by diplomatic means, thereafter.

We have prematurely withdrawn the troop levels that we had in Hong Kong. The House knows perfectly well why. It is because the emergency tour plot had become unsustainable without overstretch, so we have reduced our commitment, or at least our presence, in such places as we ought to be committed in order to relieve the emergency tour plot overstretch.

That has been done, but it is the wrong way round. The hon. Member for Motherwell, North gave a slightly parsimonious answer to, I think, my hon. Friend the Minister, when asked whether he would guarantee a higher level of troops in Britain, saying that he would match troops with commitments. Of course it is important to match troops with commitments, but if that is done simply by discarding all commitments, that is not the answer in the interests of the nation.

What my hon. Friend was seeking from the hon. Gentleman, and did not get, was an assurance that the commitments would be continued, and that the troop levels necessary for those commitments would be provided in the terms that the hon. Gentleman himself says are necessary. I await with interest the hon. Gentleman's future speeches —preferably not now—in which he will feel able to give the assurances that were sought.

I do not intend to say a great deal about Bosnia, but my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith) made one critical point. NATO has been conned by the Muslims in Bosnia into a position where we are in the gravest danger of moving into that war on a partisan basis —Muslim against Serb. It is well known that, in many instances—particularly, probably, the marketplace mortar —the Muslims have deliberately committed acts of appalling cruelty to their own people and have acted in a way that is against the rules of international conduct—for example, by placing artillery in hospital grounds, as my Committee was told early on in the conflict, and by other means—in order to bring NATO and the United Nations into the conflict against the Serbs.

Sir Michael Rose expressed his fury when he got to Gorazde and found that what he had been told about the Serbian attack on that town was bluntly untrue, that it was Muslim propaganda. That is just one example of a series of ways in which NATO is being drawn into a partial action.

It is my firm belief that, if we are to have safe havens and to threaten to bomb in order to secure them, as my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and the hon. Member for Motherwell, North said, they must not be used as bases for Muslim sorties, from which they can come out, raze a few Serb villages, go back, put their hands up and say, "This is a NATO-guaranteed safe area. You cannot attack us here." If we are to have such safe havens, they must be policed on the ground so that Muslims cannot go out and in with armed forays, and secured by air support and, if necessary, air attack. If we cannot do both, clearly we should do neither.

I view with some concern future plans for extending and widening the areas to be given air cover, backed by threats of air action, especially by our United States allies, in places where we have either no troops on the ground or, worse still, a small number of extremely vulnerable troops, who may suffer the consequences of retaliation.

My message to my right hon. and learned Friend and his ministerial colleagues is to ask them to use all the influence that the Government have in NATO and the United Nations to ensure that the impartiality of UNPROFOR is maintained and secured. Will they please try to ensure that we do not get drawn into the war in such a way as to become a party to it, with all the dreadful consequences to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell rightly drew attention? Those consequences would ensue if we had to expand our forces and effectively entered a war—quite conceivably with us on one side and Russia on the other.

I know that many of my hon. Friends wish to speak, so I shall finish by making four brief points to my right hon. and learned Friend and his colleagues. My first point concerns the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, which has already been mentioned by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell). It must have sent a dismal signal to our veterans to see that the War Graves Commission had 5 per cent. cut from its budget this year, just as we are commemorating D-day.

Perhaps my right hon. and learned Friend will be able to assure the House that that can be done with the full consent of the commissioners—

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind) *rose—*

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: If my right hon. and learned Friend will let me finish my point, I shall certainly give way to him.

I hope that he will be able to assure the House that the cut can be made in such a way that the wonderful standard to which the war graves are maintained can be sustained with the lower funding.

Mr. Rifkind: It would be helpful if I responded to that question. My hon. Friend and the whole House can feel entirely assured that we recognise the need for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to have all the funds it requires, both to maintain the graves in its usual excellent fashion and to carry out various other new projects.

I am sure that my hon. Friend will be relieved to know that, when representatives of the commission came to see me about the proposed reduction in its budget, they

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accepted that the only consequence would be a reduction in its operating surplus. They gave me a categorical assurance that there would be no effect whatever on the maintenance work or on the projects that the commission wishes to implement.

The cut will simply mean that the operating surplus that the commission has enjoyed, which is carried forward from year to year, will be slightly less than it would otherwise have been. On that basis, and that basis alone, I felt it proper and responsible to accept that the commission could absorb some modest reduction.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I am extremely grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend. I am sure that all who share our concern that the Commonwealth War Graves Commission should continue its valuable work will be equally reassured by what he has said.

I cannot resist adding that, a few years ago, I took my young son out to see the first world war graves and memorials, and in particular the grave of my great uncle, which I discovered with the aid of his father's memoirs. We found the grave, beautifully maintained, at Vimy ridge; it was a moving moment. Incidentally, hon. Members can see my great uncle's shield now; it is the fifth from the right as one goes out of the Chamber towards Central Lobby. I believe that almost every family in the country has a similar tale to tell. The value of the work of the War Graves Commission is inestimable, and we should pay tribute to it.

Secondly, representatives of the Royal British Legion have recently been to see the Defence Select Committee, and they are keen that there should be a Minister with a sub-department to look after the interests of the people whom we call ex-service men—in the United States, they are called veterans. I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to consider that proposal closely.

Ex-service men have to register their interests with many departments, usually immediately on coming out of the services rather than many years later. They do not have the direct links that civilians would have, especially in matters relating to local authorities, because they are not attached to a particular local authority for the purpose of getting the benefits that people who live in a particular area can claim. Many such detailed problems could be alleviated by a sub-department of one of the Ministries, designed to look after service men's interests. I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to revisit that possibility.

Thirdly, I must mention the reserves. There will soon be a report before the House on that subject, so I shall not dwell on it for long. However, my opinion, which I believe is widely shared, is that, as the Army is cut, the reserves should be increased. Reserves are a wonderfully cheap form of extra capacity to back up the limited resource that our small number of soldiers, sailors and airmen can provide.

I hope that, when the report on the reserves appears, there will be no attempt to cut them in line with the front-line forces. Were that to occur, our overall strength would be well below any reasonable capacity, especially for the first of the commitments that I emphasised at the beginning of my speech.

I finish as I started, by saying that, unfortunately, the morale of our armed forces is low. The Minister of State for the Armed Forces said that, whenever he made visits, he was always greeted with joy, and that everyone was extremely happy with what the Government were doing.

Mr. Hanley: I would not have put it quite like that.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I am slightly paraphrasing what my hon. Friend said, but I am sure that that is what he meant. Indeed, I am sure that, whenever he arrives somewhere, there is joy. None the less, morale is generally low, because of the uncertainty and the feeling that, for the past two or three years, we have been overstretched. There is not the certainty that I should like, that that overstretch will now come to an end.

I hope that, when my right hon. and learned Friend produces the defence costs studies, he will ensure not only that the front line remains as capable as it now, and is properly backed up with logistics and encompasses adequate and substantial reserves, but that there is no further threat of cuts to our forces in the foreseeable future. I am not confident that, once my right hon. and learned Friend has succeeded in making the present round of cuts, the Treasury will not try to impose yet another. Any such attempt would be unacceptable, and were one to be made, there would be enormous resistance to it.

7.56 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton) *rose—*

Mr. Robathan: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will know that I am relatively new to the House, so I should be grateful for your advice. I understood that in this debating Chamber the idea is to listen to the whole debate before contributing to it. I do not understand how hon. Members can drift in, make their speeches and then drift out again—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that that is not uncommon in this place, whatever is supposed to happen.

Mr. Cohen: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If that point of order was an allusion to me, I can tell the hon. Gentleman that I was here for the opening speeches, and for some of the speeches that followed.

May the fourth is an appropriate date for a defence debate. My researcher, who is a bit of a wit, said that it should be called national star wars day. He was talking about the film "Star Wars" rather than President Reagan's defence fantasy, and he added, "May the fourth be with you." That is a very bad joke; he deserves the sack for making it, but he is a good researcher.

The Army is all about force. The potential for force is of course necessary, but I want to pay tribute to the humanitarian peacekeeping effort, especially in Bosnia, which is of the highest quality. I add my tribute to those already made by hon. Members on both sides of the House to that aspect of the Army's work.

In any debate on the Army there will be an amalgam of issues that hon. Members want to mention, and that applies to me too. I shall try to deal with all those issues quickly. First—I shall try not to take up too much of the time of the House on this subject—I missed the Navy debate because I was on a parliamentary trip to Kazakhstan, where I was examining matters relevant to defence. So this will be my only chance to put the record straight on my exchange

about Trident with the Minister of State for Defence Procurement. During Question Time on 8 February I said that there had been a doubling of strategic warheads—

Mr. Robathan: The hon. Gentleman may have failed to attend any more of the debate than the first 20 minutes or so—I noticed him here then—but he must realise that this is a debate on the Army. However much he would like it to happen, the Army is not yet reduced to being armed with tridents. Trident is a naval project.

Mr. Cohen: I am amazed that the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) has elected himself in your place, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall have plenty to say about the Army. I was here for much longer than 20 minutes; I heard the bulk of the opening speeches and the subsequent speeches as well.

I said to the Minister that 96 strategic warheads for Trident submarines had replaced 48 for Polaris submarines. The Minister replied:

"the hon. Gentleman has got his figures seriously wrong."—[*Official Report*, 8 February 1994; Vol. 237, c. 131.]

I wrote to the Minister, who replied courteously on 10 March. He said:

"Malcolm Rifkind did indeed announce on 16 November 1993 that each Trident submarine would deploy no more than 96 warheads"—

the figure I mentioned—

"a revision of the previously declared maximum of 128 . . . As regards Chevaline, we have stated publicly that this upgrade to the Polaris system did not involve any increase in the number of warheads associated with the Polaris force, and we have also made clear that when Polaris entered service each submarine carried 48 warheads."

Again, that is the figure I mentioned in the debate. Far from being seriously wrong, I was seriously right. I want to make that point for the record because it is my last chance to do so.

I now turn to the scandal of the PINDAR bunker which the Ministry of Defence is building under Whitehall. The Ministry has spent more than £120 million on that hole in the ground. The Government are revealing information about the full extent of that scandal—that waste of money. As usual, the information that they have given is full of paradoxes. I give the House an example of how two pieces of information from the Ministry of Defence are contradictory.

A memorandum deposited in the Library from the Ministry to the Public Accounts Committee states that one of the reasons for the cost escalation of PINDAR was that there was only one access point of any size to the bunker. The Comptroller and Auditor General said:

"The difficulties were compounded by the relative inaccessibility of the site which resulted in all the equipment having to be lowered through an aperture, at ground level, which was just 12 ft by 6 ft."

It has been said in the press that there is only one entrance.

However, in a written answer to me only last week, the Minister said that a variety of routes existed which would enable the occupants to escape from the facility in the event that the building above it had collapsed. The Minister may query my figures on Trident and on other matters, but he can agree with me on this matter: one is not the same as a variety. Were more access points built since the work began? If so, why were the additional access points not built to take the larger equipment which had to be forced down the small hole, as the Ministry described to the Public Accounts Committee?

I have one suggestion about the future use of PINDAR now that £120 million has been wasted on it. The Ministry's bill for overnight accommodation in London for members of the armed forces and civil service personnel based elsewhere who are visiting headquarters is not inconsiderable. Why not save that money and use PINDAR as the Ministry's guest rooms—bed-and-breakfast accommodation? Perhaps bed and breakfast for the homeless would not be too bad there. The bunker is supposed to have sufficient beds already to support a complement of 400 to 500 personnel. I am sure that more beds could be added, especially now that there are additional access and egress points, to which the Minister referred in his answer.

While I am on the subject of the waste of money, I draw the Minister's attention to an article in *The Guardian* on 22 April which is entitled:

"Rhine Army withdrawal 'in chaos'".

I shall read it to put it on the record. In my experience, defence reporters often get their information from sources within the Ministry of Defence. In this instance, the information came from last month's National Audit Office report on the Ministry of Defence, the British Army in Germany, and the draw-down of equipment and stores.

The Guardian article says:

"Britain's Rhine Army withdrawal from Germany—the largest peacetime movement of troops and equipment in modern times—is at 'risk of serious breakdown in control'".

The article is quoting the National Audit Office report here. The article continues:

"Perfectly usable equipment is languishing in fields, records of potentially dangerous ammunition and detonators have gone missing, and vehicles are being cannibalised unnecessarily . . . As a result, promised savings of £177 million to the Treasury will not be met."

That is a waste of money. The article continues:

"The auditors discovered 1,800 surplus vehicles stored in the open with no plans on how to use them. Some 1,100 were unserviceable, a third had been left on site for a year, and 23 had been stored there for seven years . . . The report reserved its strongest criticism for closure of a base workshop where £65 million of stores were held. One third of the items stored there were missing . . . the auditors expressed concern that missing equipment included firearms and ammunition . . . The report points out that of 116 units which had been closed, only four accounts have been cleared".

The report describes a scandal which the Minister did not even address in his opening speech. Millions of pounds have been wasted, as outlined by the National Audit Office. Before Conservative Members start talking about their objections to cuts, they should get their own house in order and stop wasting such sums—and more.

We are to have a defence costs study. I shall not say much about that; I shall wait until the report comes out. However, I shall refer to the fact that one person involved in the study—he has been brought into the Ministry of Defence as a special adviser—is Mr. David Hart. It has been pointed out in a written answer to me that he has access to classified information. David Hart is the man who, for the previous Prime Minister, coined the phrase, "the enemy within". That phrase was aimed particularly at the miners. In effect, the phrase launched a war against the miners and anyone who opposed the Government at that time.

I shall give one quotation from the book "Misrule", written by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), which raises many issues about David Hart's role. I refer to the occasion when a notice was to be served on Arthur Scargill. As the book says, with a *Daily Express* photographer lined up, the lawyers

[Mr. Cohen]

"sneaked into the Labour Party Conference with a borrowed press pass (a gross abuse), and I saw the notice of motion and legal documentation being served on an astonished Arthur Scargill, to the sheer fury of delegates at the Party conference. What would Mrs. Thatcher have said about the activities of anyone, after the Brighton bombing, who got into the Conservative Party Conference under false pretences? Yet David Hart was doing her general bidding."

A man with that record has access to classified information and may change Ministry of Defence policies. He is an unwelcome character in this delicate study and in the Ministry of Defence. The Ministry of Defence has considerable power, both real and potential, in our society and such a person should not have power within it.

I received a letter today from Mr. Mick Jones, the national chairman of the Defence Police Federation. He refers to an article in *The Times* on 10 March which had the headline:

"3,000 MoD police may lose jobs to redundant troops".

In his letter, Mr. Jones says:

"If approval is given to this"—

the creation of an armed home guard battalion, known as the military home service engagement, using the troops that the Ministry of Defence is getting rid of to replace the Ministry of Defence police armed guarding role—

"up to 3,000 MoD policemen—some 75 per cent. of the Force—could lose their jobs. Needless to say, we are very concerned about the implications of this 'favoured option', in terms of both the threat that it holds to standards of policing and security at MoD establishments and bases and, of course, our members' jobs.

. . . the option has not been favoured for financial reasons, as the interim report claims, but because service chiefs have been placing pressure on Sir John"—

Sir John Blelloch, the man in charge of the report—

"to come up with a solution to provide jobs for some of the 13,000 servicemen and women facing redundancy over the next twelve months."

Obviously, some sort of provision must be made for those service men and women, but it should not be done at the expense of the Ministry of Defence police. By doing that, the Government would, in effect, be saying to the MoD police that they are second rate. That is a deplorable thing to say and I urge the Government to think again.

The next point that I want to make is on the issue of pay because I think that it is an obscenity that the Government are to award a 4.4 per cent. pay rise and beyond for the top brass, while other public service workers are limited to a 1.5 per cent. rise or, for many, even less. Some workers will not receive anything at all. Again the Government are giving big pay-outs to those who are already well paid, while cutting back on other public service workers and those at the lower end of the scale. The excuse that the Government are using to give even more money to the top brass is that they are applying performance-related pay.

Some Members of another place have referred to that idea of performance-related pay. Lord Hailsham of Saint Marylebone said:

"performance related pay would be inconsistent with the general ethos to be attached to a uniformed and disciplined service".

Baroness O'Caithain also made the point:

"the whole concept of performance pay, will it take note of the experience in the private sector? To my certain knowledge, the whole concept of performance related pay has been brought in as a buzz-word to hide a certain amount of avariciousness."—[*Official Report, House of Lords,* 27 April 1994; Vol. 554, c. 660-61.]

That is what the noble Lady said and that is what it is about. In even considering that, the Government are dealing in avariciousness for the top brass. How does one judge performance-related activities in the armed forces? Is it by how many people one shoots or, while on peacekeeping duty, by how many one does not shoot? How does one compare the performance of soldiers when they are given entirely different tasks? The Government should abandon that idea and abandon those differential pay rises which are just a blatant fiddle.

I shall now turn to the issue of landmines—anti-personnel mines—because they cause death and mutilation around the world, including areas in which British soldiers are on peacekeeping duties. There have been moves for a worldwide moratorium on the export of such mines, including a resolution accepted by consensus at the United Nations General Assembly calling for the trade in those foul weapons to be halted. The Government say that they export mines to countries that will use them reasonably. I do not quite know how countries use such landmines reasonably. We have exported cluster bombs, which have an anti-personnel mine element, to the Yugoslavian army in the past. Those bombs are now in the hands of soldiers who do not have a reputation for reasonableness—the Serbs. That is one reason why UN forces in Bosnia have been told to watch out for cluster bombs. The Government should realise that such mines have a life expectancy much greater than those of the Government to which we export them. Until they recognise that basic fact, civilians across the world—not to mention British troops on peacekeeping operations—will be vulnerable to those weapons.

The Army legal department also had a hand in drafting another United Nations convention on the use of inhumane weapons. I have been pressing the Government to ratify that convention. They have announced an intention to ratify it in due course, but are dragging their feet about bringing the legislation before the House. They should get on with it and do it immediately. Again, that would act as a safeguard for many of our troops from things such as napalm and phosphorus bombs.

I shall make two more brief comments before I sit down. One is to ask the Minister about medals. I have tabled a parliamentary question, but, while the Minister is here, perhaps he can answer it. What is the difference between EC and UN medals for our troops serving in Bosnia? What is the difference in the rules for wearing those medals? I have been told that there is no problem in our service men wearing UN medals, but that they are not allowed to wear EC medals publicly, openly or on ceremonial occasions. I put that down to the Government's muddle over the EC and their not having a proper policy. It is ludicrous. Those soldiers have served with distinction in Bosnia. If they get a medal from the EC, they should be able to wear it openly and publicly in exactly the same way as UN medals may be worn.

Secondly, I want to comment on the D-day anniversary. I shall not make a long comment because the muddle that the Government got themselves into spoke for itself. There should be a number of lasting tributes to our soldiers who fought and fell in that war. One lasting tribute that I want to bring to the attention of the House pertains to what those soldiers fought for and what those who came back had on their minds—to change the world and to change Britain to a better place. They were determined to create a health service, a welfare state, public education and put an end to unemployment and that it would be enshrined in our society. The one fitting tribute to those who fell on D-day

that this Government or any Government could pay would be to ensure that those principles of free health care, free education and full employment are properly maintained. The Government are sorely lacking in providing such a lasting tribute.

8.16 pm

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): I hope that the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) will acquit me of any discourtesy if I do not follow the many points that he has raised or if I do not pick up on one or two, which I would dearly like to do, as I know that some of my hon. Friends want to take part in the debate. I always find his speeches interesting, including those at the North Atlantic Assembly, of which we are both members.

There are two points that many hon. Members have made in the debate. First, they have paid tribute to the quality of the men and women who serve in the British Army and, secondly, they have suggested that morale is not as good as it ought to be. In fact, there has been quite serious criticism directed in that way. The two points may seem somewhat incompatible. How can we have such a good Army if morale is not so good? However, the points can be reconciled. There is no doubt that my hon. and right hon. Friends who form the ministerial team and who are very assiduous in their duties must be aware that cuts in defence, however carefully phased, are bound to have a down side. There is no question of that. In their early phase, cuts mean disbandment, amalgamation, a loss of well-tried skills, and a sense of loss and I suspect that if they go on for long enough, they lead to a feeling and state of mind of "where will it all end", which is bound to be depressing. So I add my voice to those of Conservative Members who spoke earlier. The time has come to end that uncertainty.

Much of the blame, of course, has been attributed—and still is by some people—to the "Options for Change", the defence White Paper published in 1990, which set out clearly the changes in the structure and strength of our armed forces in response to the change in the political scene following the end of the cold war. It was immediately criticised for being Treasury-driven. Of course, financial savings came into it because "Options for Change" rightly recognised the profound changes in foreign security policy following the end of the cold war, the imminent collapse of the Warsaw pact and the withdrawal of Soviet forces from eastern Europe, which threatened—of course—the security of the west.

The analysis that was set out in "Options for Change" in 1990 was carefully followed and accepted. It anticipated NATO's new strategic concept of 1991. There was no disagreement about our approach to the security and defence needs of our nation and the approach of our allies through NATO's new strategic concept. That concept emphasised—this is still accepted—the need for more flexible conventional forces that would be well armed and well equipped. NATO stated the need to develop a European security and defence identity within the NATO alliance. It accepted at the same time that with the withdrawal of much of the threatening posture of the cold war there would be a reduction in the size of the NATO forces.

The message for the United Kingdom was of particular interest. It spelled out that our forces in future would rarely be expected to act alone. The job will be to contribute to multinational formations with forces equipped to face high-intensity conflicts. My hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), the Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence, expressed his views about how he thought that Russia could pose a serious threat to us. I do not want to go into the matter and debate the issues with him—but there is no doubt that Russia, although economically weak, has strengthened its armed forces considerably. It still manufactures extremely powerful weapons, some of them with the most advanced technology.

I strongly endorse the view that has been expressed by my right hon. and hon. Friends that a British Army that is to carry out its duties to the nation along with international responsibilities must be equipped to fight high-intensity conflicts.

NATO's stategy meant that allied forces—not only British forces—would be smaller. Everyone expected some sort of peace dividend. I make no apology for that. We all felt the same way in this country. The same goes for Europe generally and for north America. Every treasury in the countries in those areas responded to the deep wish that expenditure on defence should be reduced. The question we must ask ourselves is whether we have gone too far and too fast. It is worth considering what that means in terms of our own expenditure.

In the years 1980-84, our average expenditure on defence ran at about 5.2 per cent. of gross domestic product. By the end of 1992, we had reduced that expenditure by about 23 per cent. There was a fall from 5.2 per cent. to 4 per cent. For some, that was the peace dividend. Of course, we have gone further. The White Paper that is before us tells us that in 1992-93 expenditure will fall by a further 14 per cent., ending up at 2.5 per cent. of GDP. It is that further reduction that has caused us so much concern.

The hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid), who spoke from the Opposition Front Bench, referred to General Sir Martin Farndale. I have heard him speak on one or two occasions, and as a master gunner his is a voice to be respected. He is a man who, along with others with experience of the Army, has gone into some detail to study the impact of expenditure reductions on the efficiency of our armed forces, and especially the Army. It is particularly interesting, in view of our command of the rapid reaction corps, which has a valuable role still to play in NATO, that he could say that we already have a generation of brigade commanders who have never experienced the full pressure of hard, all-arms training. He has stressed that those officers will soon become generals. He observes that brigades, let alone divisions, seldom train together with their own units. He takes the view that the capability to conduct combat effectively at short notice at the higher level is quickly being lost.

If we do not have training at the higher level, as time passes our fitness to command the rapid reaction corps will be challenged. If we are to be equipped with high-tech weapons and equipment, all-arms training is vital. As the general pointed out:

> "It is a complex business to bring together on a widely-spread, fast-moving battlefield, armour, artillery, armoured infantry, helicopters, engineers and high-tech communications and logistics, not to mention the need to train with the Royal Navy."

It is possible, of course, that as we look to the future we may not feel that it is necessary to have a rapid reaction corps. The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East

[Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith]

(Mr. Campbell) talked about that. Somewhere along the line, however, there must be a unified force within the NATO alliance with a European identity. If it is to carry any conviction, it must have the necessary degree of acceptance and unity of command. Surely there is no point in our playing our part unless we all have the same objectives. If it is thought that we should bail out of the commitment, we shall contribute to the downfall of the NATO alliance and the weakening of European security, and confine ourselves to having a seriously reduced Army.

It is useful that we should be able to show the flag, as it were, and to have Royal Engineers contributing to the welfare of people in under-developed countries. No doubt there are responsibilities in Belize and elsewhere that we can carry out. In my judgment, however, it is a fundamental mistake to confuse the real role of a well-led, well-armed and well-trained British Army.

Unless we are reaching the end of the road of cuts, there will be increased concern among those who normally would expect to support us.

Mr. Martlew: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that to come down to 2.9 per cent. of gross domestic product is too great a cut?

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: No. I am saying that if we move down the path of cuts we are in great danger of finding that it will be too little. That is what I am suggesting. I do not see how we shall be able to meet some of our responsibilities if we continue on the present path unless, of course, there is an increase in GDP. If that happens, the problem will, to some extent, be solved.

I do not want to go into too much detail because I am aware that others wish to speak. However, in a letter that I received about the Territorial Army from Colonel Sir Greville Spratt, who is in command of the Territorial Auxiliary and Volunteer Reserve Association for greater London, he emphasises that if the TA is to carry out extra responsibilities when there has already been a cut of about 30 per cent., its numbers should not be further reduced. That should not happen unless, of course, it can be argued that efficiency will be increased and there will be better equipment and more training. In my judgment, there is no cheap option.

As for cuts in the tail, it would not surprise hon. Members to know that there are those who wonder whether we are rigorous enough in cutting the civilian side of the Ministry of Defence. A letter that I received today referred to what the author described as the "delaying tactics" of a Minister. The letter states that the savings that have so far been introduced or proposed in the "MOD Civil Service" amount to only nine redundancies in what is described as the

"Open Structure MOD Civil Service staff".

The gentleman who wrote the letter suggests that there are no fewer

"than sixty five Civil Servants in the MOD who are ranked and paid as generals; fifty at 2 Star, eleven at 3 Star and four at 4 or 5 Star."

I do not know whether that is true, but if people who are normally well informed think that that is the position—those who are in the TA or those who are no longer connected with the armed forces—their criticisms need to be answered. I hope that that will happen when my hon. Friend the Minister replies to the debate.

Many hon. Members have expressed concern about the impact that uncertainty can have, especially during a period of running down our armed forces. We all understand why that process had to be implemented. However, if we believe that we have some special skills within our nation that we can call upon—some special resolve or some special characteristics in our national make up—that makes us proud of our military history, I hope that we can recognise too that during the course of our history there have been tremendous lapses that have let down those who would willingly sacrifice their life for the cause of protecting our country and helping to preserve peace. That happened in the 1930s.

I recall the troops returning from Dunkirk. If anything, Dunkirk certainly was a demonstration of national resolve and resilience, but it was hardly our most glorious military achievement. On the whole, the Army was badly equipped, badly trained and not well led. It took someone of the calibre of Monty, and others, to get hold of the British Army and pull it together again. It took some years to build up the quality that made possible the successes at Alamein and on D-day.

It is easy to run something down, but very difficult to pick up the pieces. The message, therefore, is that we understand that, like other Governments, the Government had a job to do, but a line has been drawn in the sand, which signifies that after Ministers have completed the tail and front-line exercises we want no further cuts that may undermine the efficiency of our armed forces. I suspect that, given their quality, Ministers will come up with the right answers.

8.31 pm

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): I rise to speak unashamedly about my constituency, which has felt the sharp edge of what has happened to the armed forces and to the Army in particular. Many hon. Members will have heard me speak about the Navy in my constituency, which has experienced many cuts in recent times, but just as many of my constituents are with the Army at Bovington and Lulworth and many of them work at the signals establishment at Blandford.

We have been pleased by the recent concentration on achieving efficiency in the tail. The 18-base workshop has shown that it can refurbish tanks much faster and cheaper. People often overlook the fact that, if the workshop takes in one tank a week, which is the norm, instead of taking nearly 40 weeks and having 40 tanks out of service at a time and doing it in 18 weeks, about another 20 tanks are available for the front line; that shows the efficiency savings that can be achieved.

I have always supported Ministers' efforts to ensure efficiency and value for money, but nothing lowers morale among my civilian workers and within the armed forces, who want to achieve efficiency, more than waste. It was disappointing, therefore, to see the Opposition deploying their usual tactic. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid)—I know that he is not in his place at present—who is clearly a man of the new Labour party. He could take any portfolio without being criticised by the Labour Treasury team because he did not make a single commitment that would cost a penny or save a job in my constituency. Interestingly, the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), contemplating government before the last election, said that cutting the

armed forces in the 1990s would match the bonanza that the Conservatives had from oil in the 1980s. That really is the truth of what Labour is saying. It wants to hide behind the fig leaf of the defence review.

Another fig leaf behind which Labour wants to hide is the diversification agency. The Employment Select Committee investigated how we should regenerate employment once the defence work has gone. It said specifically that a diversification agency was not the right route and that we must seek new industries and new jobs, which is what we are doing in Dorset.

I pay tribute to the excellent work of the front-line and tail forces, but their morale is at its lowest point. Dorset, like the rest of the country, is about to remember D-day. All the political parties in Dorset, and people of no political party, spent much time compiling a D-day brochure and planning other events in the area only to find that the Labour party was trying to make party political capital out of unfortunate remarks made by *The Sun*. We were all criticised for describing D-day as a celebration. I have the NEC's action advice note dated March 1994—circular 14/94, headed "D-day Celebrations"—in which Larry Whitty, Labour's general secretary, writes to all Labour council leaders on the imperative of the Labour party being involved in the D-day celebrations. I am sure that the Labour leaders wanted to be involved in the D-day celebrations for the right reasons, but the only reason Larry Whitty gives is that such involvement would be politically significant, as the date falls three days before the European elections. Yet the Labour party has tabled an early-day motion condemning the Government for trying to do the right thing by our forces and our home front by commemorating events on D-day.

Mr. Martlew: Will the hon. Gentleman explain why the Royal British Legion was upset by the Government's proposals?

Mr. Bruce: It got hold of the wrong idea. It believed that people might suggest that the street parties did not have a serious purpose, but the "Kilroy" programme showed that the organisers of the street parties are doing exactly the right thing. They asked veterans and widows, "Would you like us to arrange for you to get out on the street and to meet our children so that they can find out what D-day was all about?" The educational effect would have been extremely good, and a number of my constituents wrote to me, especially those who were out in Burma, asking, "Are we being forgotten?" They wanted to ensure that something was happening for everybody. That is what we have done in Dorset, and I believe that we have done it particularly sensitively.

Defence employees working in my constituency, especially those in the Procurement Executive, have grave concerns. Initially, the Procurement Executive had about 12,000 employees—clearly, that was too many—but now 10,000 are employed. It was suggested that 7,000 of them could be located in a Procurement Executive headquarters north of Bristol. Newspaper reports now suggest that the figure might have fallen to 5,000. We need to find out what is happening. Those employees are not happy to hear that shops, swimming pools, gymnasiums, landscape gardens and ornamental lakes will be available when they get to their new high-tech headquarters; they are even less happy to hear that the budget for the ASPECT computer system, which was to be installed to ensure that everybody could work together, has not been approved or might not be proceeded with. Computer people in the armed forces to whom I have spoken suggest that no new money will be found to install the system for the Procurement Executive.

It is perhaps even more surprising that the MOD decided to spend £250 million on CHOTS—the corporate headquarters office technology system. That system was designed specifically to allow departments scattered around the country to talk to each other. About £300 million is to be spent to put the Procurement Executive on a single site, and I believe that that is a waste of money. If we are to keep morale high, we must demonstrate that we can save money. We should not waste it.

When I consider the professionalism of our armed forces, I am reminded of my attempt to windsurf off Weymouth last weekend. I was up to my neck in the waves wondering how I could get on to a windsurfer which kept going in the wrong direction while the experts whizzed past me. The MOD headquarters is probably up to its neck in it as I was then.

We have excellent people in the armed forces. We should tell them that we have to trim our budgets. However, we should have targets for them. Perhaps we should even give them incentive pay to get the results. We should certainly tell them not to spend more money than they are going to save. We must ensure that our armed forces are left with their morale intact and that they save money, but that our armed forces have the teeth that we require.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I call the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay).

Sir Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): Oh.

8.40 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): I am conscious of the fact that other hon. Members wish to speak and that one of them has just exclaimed in frustration. To them, I apologise for not being in the Chamber at the beginning of the debate. I was attending a sitting of the Transport Select Committee and have come straight from there to participate in this debate, in which Labour Members have a legitimate interest.

I join in the tributes paid to the skill and dedication of our armed forces and particularly to the skill and dedication of members of the Army who continue to face peril in many parts of the world. In particular, I pay tribute to the Royal Anglian Regiment which is associated with my constituency and which is currently serving in Bosnia, where it has made great sacrifices.

A Conservative Member claimed that change is inevitable. That is true. Hon. Members on both sides of the House may find uncomfortable the fact that there is, to a large extent, a convergence between the policies of the parties on defence and foreign affairs—in contrast to the position a decade or more ago.

Although Conservative Members ridiculed and dismissed Opposition suggestions for a major defence review, it was clear from the content of Conservative Members' speeches—and particularly those of the hon. Members for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer), for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) and for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith)—that they had

[Mr. Andrew Mackinlay]

grave concerns about the development and direction of our armed forces. They emphasised the need for a major review of our defence commitments.

I was particularly impressed by the hon. Member for Upminster. He demonstrated that need when he referred to an apparent arbitrary withdrawal of a platoon from Korea. He also expressed grave concern about our withdrawal from Belize. That shows that, no matter how much Conservative Members protest, there is clearly a need, which was reflected in their speeches, for a review of our commitments and resources.

The situation is changing rapidly around the world and particularly in Europe. We must recognise that if we are not to be stretched and so ensure that we can meet military and political commitments, we must have the armed services resources to match those obligations and commitments. That is clearly not the case at the moment. The MOD is making knee-jerk reactions and interim decisions by deploying stretched military resources. That is not healthy for the armed forces or in the best interests of the United Kingdom.

I have referred to the dynamic situation in Europe and other hon. Members have referred to their perception of a dangerous situation in central and eastern Europe. There is a danger of over-exaggerating the problem. However, we must recognise that some very fragile democracies are emerging in central and eastern Europe. There are historical anxieties in those democracies. Many see a threat from the east, from what was the Soviet Union and what is now Russia.

We in the west are not doing enough to buttress or reassure those democracies. In parenthesis, we are not doing enough for their economies either. I am particularly concerned about the Visegrad group of countries—Poland, Hungary and the Czech republic—which clearly have a legitimate claim to admission to NATO. The partnership for peace programme was a sop. We in the west have been somewhat dishonest. For 50 years we said, "Look over the wall." After the collapse of communism, the wall came down but we still have not allowed them to join the club.

It is argued that the armies of those countries are not equipped to western standards and that there is no democratic control of those armies. It is argued that their technology and armaments do not match NATO standards. Those are feeble and bogus excuses. We should do much more to help those countries to join the NATO club. I deeply regret the fact that we have not fulfilled our commitments to them.

Many corners of the globe have been mentioned in this debate but there has been no reference to Gibraltar since I have been in the Chamber. I am deeply concerned that the Chief Minister of the Gibraltar Government has had to flag up the anxiety of his state that its economy would be greatly jeopardised if, as he fears, there is an arbitrary and fairly immediate withdrawal of MOD resources and personnel from Gibraltar. He legitimately fears that that would have an enormous impact.

We have obligations to Gibraltar. In addition, the defence and political interests of the United Kingdom are such that we should maintain commitments there. There should certainly be no arbitrary withdrawal which would jeopardise the economy in Gibraltar. That would send the wrong signals to other countries with an interest in Gibraltar.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) referred to the Blelloch review of the MOD police. It is appropriate to raise that point today because we understand that Blelloch and the Minister are contemplating replacing or reducing the MOD police by a new force referred to as the Military Home Service Engagement. That would be a way of diminishing Government embarrassment at the cost of making redundant members of the Army, Navy and Air Force. It would keep them in uniform. They would have to fulfil duties currently carried out by MOD police.

It would be wrong to go down that road for several reasons. We must be much more sensitive to the needs of our armed forces personnel who the Government decide they need to shed. If the Labour party's view of a major defence review were adopted, many of those redundancies would, in any event, be put on ice.

To go down that road would also be to misunderstand the role of the MOD police officers. They are constables. They are specially trained and have special skills. They are civilian police officers. They need to be in terms of legislation passed by this House such as the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and that governing the police inspectorate. Their role cannot be fulfilled sensitively or according to existing legislation by service men who would be under the control not of the MOD or a police committee, but of the generals. I do not mean any disrespect to the generals; it is just not right to put the new force under the control of anyone besides the existing police committee.

I hope that the Minister will reassure the public, who are concerned about policing policy, and the MOD Police Federation on this score. I trust that he will not adopt the suggestion of the Blelloch committee.

The Government need to instigate a thorough review of all non-Home Office police forces. It is not good enough to ignore such forces, including the MOD police, while passing legislation relating to Home Office police forces.

Soon after we elected Madam Speaker I tabled early-day motion 2, which called for a veterans Minister. I am pleased to say that interest in the subject was renewed in this Session of Parliament in the form of an early-day motion which attracted many more signatures and which has been fully endorsed by the Royal British Legion. Recent events have shown that this country is out of kilter with others in this respect—we lack a Minister with a responsibility dedicated to promoting the interests of veterans. Not surprisingly, there has been a considerable increase in the number of people claiming war pensions of late, and that trend will continue as those who fought in the second world war reach old age. In the next decade, therefore, the needs and interests of those who fought in that war will become more apparent, and we will need a Minister dedicated to looking after their interests, not to mention those of the war widows, orphans and dependants. Some of the embarrassment—I put it no more strongly than that because I do not want to score points—and misunderstanding that surrounded the events marking D-day might easily have been avoided had there been such a Minister in post.

The cut in the grant for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission also bears on this point. Earlier, the Secretary of State intervened in an endeavour to reassure his hon. Friends that the cut could be absorbed by the commission.

That did not satisfy me. Frankly, I was amazed to learn of the cut. All the evidence suggests that it was done without consultation with the other principal participants in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. That was discourteous to say the least. The underlying fear of those of us who frequent the war graves is that if the Government get away with cutting the grant this year, they will follow that up with more reductions in future years. I would deeply regret that.

I should also like to mention the disappointment felt by those who did national service at the fact that they are not allowed, if they work in any uniformed public service, to wear the medal struck by the Royal British Legion to mark their national service. This is no small issue; I and others have raised it with the Ministry. The Ministry seems to have adopted a rather petty, mean-minded attitude to this issue—or was it the Prime Minister? It should and could have been recommended to the Queen that a medal be struck for people who did national service, enabling them to wear it when on duty in a uniformed service; there are many such people in the police force, the traffic warden service, the ambulance and fire services, and in voluntary organisations such as St. John Ambulance, who should be allowed to wear a medal and ribbon because they gave this country dedicated service of which they are justly proud. Alternatively, if a new medal cannot be struck, the Queen should be advised that they should be allowed to wear the one that the Royal British Legion has already struck.

The Government should recognise the widespread view of hon. Members—no matter how Conservative Members dress it up—that we should stop making piecemeal decisions about our armed forces and related political matters, and should step back and look at them in the round. Such decisions are foolhardy in the extreme.

Secondly, hon. Members on both sides of the House have drawn attention today to the need for a Minister who will be dedicated to promoting the best interests of war veterans, and of their widows and dependants. Such a Minister would also be responsible for commemorating their service on behalf of the Crown in years gone by, and for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, inasmuch as the Government contribute to it. The new Minister could also deal with the VE-day and VJ-day celebrations, and would marshal resources on behalf of former service men and women and liaise with their organisations. He or she would promote all these interests at arm's length from those in charge of operational matters, which should clearly remain the responsibility of the defence team.

8.56 pm

Sir Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): I have been attending Army debates for more years than I care to mention. Unfortunately, in some respects they always seem to take a similar form: very lengthy opening speeches, lasting well over two hours today, and far too little mention of the Army.

I noted with interest that the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) hinted that our Army is too small in some ways, but that he refused to commit the Labour party to any increase in its size. Nor would he be drawn on defence expenditure in general. Of course I understand his dilemma; he handles it skilfully if somewhat lengthily.

I am anxious not to fall out with the Minister of State, but I strongly suspect that somewhere in the MOD there is a computer program marked "Minister of State's opening speech for Army debate". It seems to come up on the word processor fairly often—I have heard it many times. It would certainly do no harm if the official concerned were to suggest a few more matters pertinent to the Army of today—perhaps less self-congratulation and a little more explanation.

Morale in the Army unquestionably is not at its height, and the Government should have addressed that today. Recruitment is a matter of concern, and the redundancy programme has been grasped with such enthusiasm by many of those who have been made redundant that the Army has been short of certain grades of officers and NCOs. That is a fault in the Army, and is not the fault of Ministers.

Training areas are already being ground up by the increase in the weight of equipment and because there are more training regiments in the United Kingdom at present. There is a lamentable shortage of barracks, which is an historical failure by the Army to provide its own home in the United Kingdom. Meanwhile, large sums of British taxpayers' money are spent on building expensive barracks in Germany to a higher standard than we have here.

I hope that, as the Army considers its withdrawal from Germany, there will be a substantial financial settlement. We have put a great deal of money into works programmes in Germany and it would be wrong for us simply to give that away because there been some change in the strategic scene.

Another subject about which my constituents are bothered and which I would have expected to be mentioned is the ridiculous payments made to women who joined the armed forces on the strict condition that if they became pregnant they would leave. They are now going to tribunals and subsequently being awarded huge sums of money. The taxpayers and the armed forces resent that. I would have expected some explanation from the Government on some of those subjects.

I am one of those who take the view that we have no business being in Bosnia. I also acknowledge that I was wrong in imagining that little good could be done, as I believe that a great deal of good has been done. Many of the convoys would not have got through without the assistance of our troops. No doubt there are plenty of different arguments about the subject, but the British public are certainly not being given an all-encompassing view of the complexities of the situation. The media have been incredibly one-sided without giving the historical facts and the detailed knowledge of what is going on. I believe that that view is shared across the Floor of the House.

With regard to the length of time which troops may spend in Bosnia, I recall that when troops first went into Northern Ireland it was to be a short police operation. Twenty-five years later, they are still there. Not only that; they are there in much larger numbers. Unless a firm decision is made shortly—it will have to be shortly—we will find ourselves in exactly the same quagmire in former Yugoslavia as we have in Northern Ireland, as the Americans did in Vietnam and the Russians did in Afghanistan. It is a historical fact, and we never ever learn. We really must recognise the problem.

I read with pleasure a report in *The Sunday Times*—my experience of that newspaper is that much of what it prints

[Sir Jerry Wiggin]

is not necessarily accurate—on "Front Line First". It seemed to have several commendable points. The first was the subtle, but long-overdue, request to serving personnel to "tell us how you think we can be more efficient". I am delighted that that exercise has been carried out and I only wish that "Front Line First" had come before "Options for Change". I think that that would have been the right way round.

There were so many subjects where things could be done. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) will not be happy with the suggestion that there should be a co-ordination of the teaching of music. I tried to do that when I was at the Ministry of Defence and my hon. Friends may care to discover the Gale report on the teaching of music. The Army and the Navy hire marchers and teach them to play music. The Royal Air Force hires musicians and teaches them to march, and that is much cheaper. If the music school is to be under the flight path of London airport, so be it. One music school would be better than three.

It has been suggested that the three staff colleges should be put together. I tried to argue in favour of that also, not just for cost reasons but for military reasons. If my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces reads Sir Peter de la Billiere's book on the Gulf war, he will see Sir Peter comment on the fact that many of the senior officers who were coming together in his tri-service headquarters had never met each other before. That is totally inefficient and wrong. However, the question is—where do we put the staff college?

Greenwich is a nice place, but it is expensive to maintain and contains a small nuclear reactor—believe it or not—which is expensive to move. The Army has been carrying out exercises from Camberley for so many years that it did not think that it could learn new ground, and the RAF—as was pointed out in the debate—is very fond of its base at Bracknell. Ministers must put their foot down and say that the time has come for tri-service training at that level. It should be possible to find a home for that training.

As to the question of medical resources, the British Medical Association makes it an absolute requirement that a limited number of doctors are trained each year, and that is a long-standing practice. There is a finite medical resource, whether in or out of uniform, and the same applies to a large extent to hospitals. At the time of the Gulf war, a lot of soldiers went off as Territorials to work as medics, and having a large number of uniformed medical officers in all three services is a complete waste of money.

I give much encouragement to my hon. Friends in those exercises, which are long overdue. My right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Sir A. Hamilton) went over many of the things which I did 10 years before him, and I hope that at last somebody will tackle many of those things.

As to the Procurement Executive needing 7,500 civil servants, I am bemused as to what they do. The fact remains that there are three people watching one to make sure that one does not pinch anything. The actual cost is completely uncommercial and unrelated to the practice in every large company. It is time that there was a huge shake-up in simple terms of numbers. Although we welcome the idea that the civil servants should come together and that they are coming to Bristol, there is a case for reducing the numbers.

My favourite hobby horse is the Territorial Army. My hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) was not entirely right when he referred to the TA. The proposition is that there should be a further cut in the numbers. The TA has already been reduced from its target figure of more than 70,000 to 63,500. I repeat, as has been oft repeated by anyone who has given any thought to the matter, that at a time when we are cutting our Regular forces, we should improve, increase and strengthen our reserves. They are a cheap alternative. Common sense demands that that should happen.

I give credit to my hon. Friend the Minister. I know that he has questioned the advice that he has been given. I assume that that is the reason for the delay in making his announcement. I am rooting for him in the hope that he is battling with the Regular soldiers, who are only too keen to cut out the reserves for all the wrong reasons. I hope that he is winning his battle to retain the TA much as it is today. It is already too small.

I also want to know what has happened to so much of the equipment that has been drawn out of Germany. Radio sets have been taken out of tanks. Yet my Yeomanry have radio sets that are out of date and cannot communicate with other units. The equipment must exist because it was in Germany. I suspect that it is sitting in some warehouse and that it is beyond the capacity of the Army's administration to move it from Germany or wherever to TA units.

I am not as enthusiastic as many other commentators about the pronouncement that Territorials should go to the Falklands to take part in that garrison. I have consulted some senior officers in the TA and they are extremely worried about it. The only men who will be able to find a month, or more than a month—

Mr. Brazier: Four months.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: I am sorry, four months. It will probably be four months for the first manoeuvre. The only men who will be able to find that amount of time will be the unemployed or those who feel that it is possible to give up their civilian job. They will go at platoon strength so they will not operate as part of their unit. I suspect that the Regular Army will judge that particular platoon and apply their judgment to the whole of the Territorial Army. That is a worrying point.

Mr. Brazier: Surely the point is that we should look for much shorter commitments such as providing the enemy in BATUS. We need commitments that could be done over a period of, say, two, four or six weeks by a formed sub-unit or a sub-unit from a formed unit.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: That sounds an excellent idea. The other point is that the Falklands in the relevant months are extremely unpleasant to be in. The rain raineth every day. It is the middle of the winter.

Mr. Mackinlay: It is bloody cold.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: As the hon. Gentleman says, it is bloody cold. It is likely that that training could not be carried out for about half the time. Ministers should have a look at the timing of the move of Territorials to the Falklands. In the margins of that, will they also have a look at the infrequency of the RAF service to the Falklands?

Obviously, I can only ask questions about the flights that are available to the public, but the reliability of the RAF airline is so poor as to be deplorable.

"Front Line First" is the message, and I think that we would all support that. It means that the Territorial Army —our reserves—*[Interruption.]* "Front Line First" means that we have to keep our fighting forces in good order. The truth of the matter remains that if the Territorial Army is abolished—the naval reserve has already been abolished and the RAF reserve has effectively been abolished—we shall not carry out the "Front Line First" policy which the Government rightly propound.

In referring in a previous debate to the EH101 helicopters, my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement said:

"The saga of support helicopters for our armed forces has been Wagnerian in its length and Shakespearean in its complexity." —[*Official Report*, 26 July 1993; Vol. 229, c. 919.]

If it goes on much longer it will soon be like a Gilbert and Sullivan opera. I suggest yet again that, as we watch our forces immobilised by the fact that they have not received these helicopters which were promised 10 years ago, we are seriously reducing the fighting effectiveness of our forces. My right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) propounded the views that he put forward at the time of "Options for Change"—which I did not vote for —and said that the idea was to have our equipment as up to date and as good as any in the world. That means mobility and it means helicopters. It is time that a decision was taken.

I welcomed the Secretary of State's intervention on the subject of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. The commission costs as much as it has to cost. As I understand it, at present the various Commonwealth countries concerned—a large number contribute to funding the pool—are simply told what it costs to pay the gardeners and keep the gardens and graves in order, and that cost is borne in an agreed percentage by all of the countries concerned.

I should be very alarmed if that principle were to be breached in any way. I have visited the cemetery at Lae in Papua New Guinea—one could not go much further away than that—and it is a beautiful place. Anyone who has spent the night in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission hut on the beach at Gallipoli will know that it is an emotional experience. I do not think that I or anyone else would tolerate messing with that marvellous organisation.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I give notice that I wish to apply to raise on the Adjournment a matter which is of great concern to my hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Deva) and myself—British Army bands, military music and Kneller Hall.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a matter for the Chair to deal with now.

9.11 pm

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): I share the frustration of the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) who has been trying to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I thought that we could speak for as long as we liked in the debate, but at the end of the day someone has lost out.

I register my dismay that the Government business managers decided to schedule the Army debate for today. It was obvious that the debate would be poorly attended, but it was agreed to by the usual channels—I suspect that the Opposition Whips Office may have had something to do with it as well.

We always thought that more Tory Members than Labour Members would be present for the debate—obviously those people who have been out on the streets realise why that is so. This is a very safe bunker for Tory Members at the moment. They would all like to say, "I can't get back to my constituency—I'm speaking in the army debate". But we have managed to bring out enough troops to keep many of those on the Benches opposite tied up.

It is obvious that Government Ministers do not like debates about the services. I suspect that they will use this experience to say some time in the future that because such debates are not well attended they should perhaps be axed. They have axed everything else and I think that they would now like to axe service debates. Another reason why they have these debates on such days is that the Government do not want any publicity about what they are doing with the armed forces.

I want to chide the Minister of State for the Armed Forces a little. I am glad to see that he has been present for the debate today. During the debate on the Royal Air Force he made a speech, then left the Chamber and did not return. I am sure that that will not happen again.

Mr. Hanley: Just to set the record straight, I could not stay to hear the closing speeches on that occasion because I was attending an Army function and the people at that function would have been extremely disappointed if I had not been there. I asked the permission of the House for that to be taken into account and I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman finds it unacceptable.

Mr. Martlew: I understand that members of the RAF were not too happy about the situation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) has knowledge and enthusiasm. The hon. Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) said that my hon. Friend could adopt any brief, but I do not think that that is true. My hon. Friend has a genuine affection for, and knowledge of, the subject. I suspect that in many ways he is a frustrated soldier, but the Army's loss is the Labour party's gain. He will make up for that when he becomes a Minister. I think that he will make a good Minister for the Armed Forces in the next Labour Administration.

The right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King), rather sadly, seems to spend his time haunting the Back Benches, defending the policies that he made when he was in charge of the Ministry of Defence. He possibly has a feeling that history will not treat him well in terms of his stewardship of the Ministry of Defence, and he is probably right.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) again made an excellent speech, with which we could not disagree in any detail. My only suspicion is that if his hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) had made a speech it would have been very different. That tends to be the case with the Liberals: we all know that one says one thing while another says something else. However, it was a good speech and it referred to what will happen to the troops who are brought back if we have peace in Northern Ireland. I shall discuss

[Mr. Martlew]

that later. The hon. and learned Gentleman also made an argument about the War Graves Commission, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay).

I was glad that the Secretary of State was here. I thought that we were going to have an Army debate at which the Secretary of State would not be present, but I understand that he was at the public showing of Eurofighter 2000. Many of us regret the fact that it was scheduled for today and we could not go. I am not sure that the Minister said that the budget of the War Graves Commission would not be cut: I suspect that he actually said that it would be cut but that it would not make any difference. He should have obtained the view of the House on that, which is that it would not be tolerated. Any reduction in standards of war graves will not be tolerated by either side of the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for the Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) made a good constituency speech about the firing range in his constituency and the need to keep Benbecula open. He has great knowledge of it. He took the opportunity, as always, to remind us of the need for European defence security, on which he is an expert and for which he is an enthusiast. He seemed to be saying that Europeans should intervene in Bosnia and Africans should interfere in Rwanda. I do not agree with that. If one gets into that situation, it could be dangerous.

The hon. Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer), who had a distinguished service career from 1943 to 1957, was rather churlish about the Labour party. He gave no credit to the Labour Governments from 1974 onwards, who looked after the armed forces very well. He let the cat out of the bag when he said that his worst time in the Army was when he was serving in the Suez canal zone between 1951 and 1954. That was under a Tory Administration. He said that the situation was similar to that today, which again is under a Tory Administration.

I always tend to agree with the hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), the Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence, but today I thought that he was being a bit of a political dinosaur. I hope that what he said about the power of Russia is not correct. His speech gave one the feeling that if we still had troops in India he would want them to stay there. He is known as one of the best friends of the armed forces in the House and on some occasions that can be a disadvantage.

On the question of Belize, I agree with the hon. Gentleman—as, I believe, does the Labour party. I agree also with much of what he said about the very difficult situation in Bosnia. There is a great deal of disinformation coming out of Bosnia. I do not believe that we can rely on the British media, and I do not expect that the hon. Gentleman will be called to discuss the Bosnian situation on the "Today" programme.

Regrettably, I was not in the Chamber to hear the speech of the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Sir A. Hamilton), which I understand was very entertaining. Indeed, one of my hon. Friends has said that it was better than the speeches that he made from the Dispatch Box. The reason could be that today he was saying what he believed, whereas on other occasions he was expressing Government policy. I see that the right hon. Gentleman has just arrived in the Chamber. For his benefit I should repeat that, while I missed his speech, I understand that it was very enlightening and entertaining and that one of my hon. Friends thinks that it was better than the ones he made as a Front Bencher. The point is that on this occasion the right hon. Gentleman was saying what he believed.

When history comes to be written, my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) will be credited with putting down the questions which resulted in the Scott inquiry. There is no doubt that my hon. Friend is very diligent. Ministers know how many questions he puts down. It is one means of securing information that Ministers do not normally divulge in debate.

I disagree with my hon. Friend's remarks about the pay of the armed forces. There has been an increase of about 4 per cent., but the Government have welched on it to the extent that only 2.7 per cent. was paid on 1 April and personnel will have to wait until next January for the rest. In fact, there will be no more money in their pay packets this month. Indeed, there will be less, by virtue of increased national insurance contributions and the extra income tax imposed by the Government. The truth is that, so far, people in the armed forces have had no increase at all.

The hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith), who is not in the Chamber at present, made a strange speech. I thought that my intervention would be helpful. I asked the hon. Gentleman whether he thought that a cut from 5.2 per cent. of gross domestic product in 1990 to 2.9 per cent. in 1996 was too great. He said that it was, in fact, too little. I do not know whether he did not understand my question or whether he was advocating further defence cuts. If he were in his place now, he could perhaps explain himself.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock carried on his campaign with regard to the health and welfare of war veterans. He also mentioned the War Graves Commission and brought up the issue of the wearing of medals. A Member of Parliament who takes such a specific interest in these matters is to be congratulated.

I have a great deal of affection for the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin). I always remember the favourite words that he said to me when, as a member of the Select Committee, I was to go on a foreign trip: "Young man, we never go anywhere that isn't civilised." Unfortunately, since taking on the Army brief I have been to both Macedonia and Bosnia.

I took exception to the hon. Gentleman's attack on women. Women in the armed forces had to agree to the conditions. There was no option: the duty was imposed by the Government. I shall return to that matter later. I found myself agreeing with the hon. Gentleman, however, when he pointed out that the Government are not increasing but cutting the numbers in the Territorial Army. No one listening to the debate would have thought so.

In some ways this debate has been too wide ranging. The hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare was right when he said that we do not often talk about the Army. Perhaps I should now try to concentrate on that aspect of the subject. In his opening remarks in the debate on this year's defence estimates, the Secretary of State for Defence said that we have world-class armed forces who are held in high regard throughout the world. Although that statement is still true, it is in spite of, not because of, Government policies. If it is to remain true, how long can we continue to have a Ministry of Defence that is run by the Treasury and takes defence cuts every time that it is asked?

In last year's debate on the Army, it was said that further redundancies would be made. The Army took the brunt of those, with 7,000 redundancies in the armed forces this

year, 1,000 of which were compulsory—despite the phantom army of 3,000 troops that have appeared. I was not convinced by the Minister's explanation on that. The Government were criticised for making compulsory redundancies because they are an easy way to destroy morale. Other options were available, one of which was to look at the redundancy package. That package may have been considered generous, but with nearly 3 million unemployed and redundant soldiers facing years on the dole queue it was not generous enough.

When I asked the Minister of State for the Armed Forces how many people had volunteered for redundancy, he answered that those records were not kept centrally.

Mr. Hanley: Perhaps I may help the hon. Gentleman. More people volunteered for redundancy than there were redundancies available, but the redundancies were not necessarily in the right places for the particular skills. On the replacement of jobs, 80 per cent. of those made redundant in the second phase were in jobs within two months of leaving the armed forces.

Mr. Martlew: First, the Minister is complacent about the fact that 20 per cent. of those who left the armed forces are without a job. Secondly, although I am grateful to him for that intervention, why did he tell me that the figures were not available when I put down a written question? The reason must be because there were many more volunteers than the Government wanted to admit, which was a measure of morale in the armed forces.

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Gentleman could not run a whelk stall.

Mr. Martlew: The Minister says that I could not run a whelk stall. When I worked in the private sector I ran a better redundancy and personnel policy than the present Government.

Mr. King: Although "Options for Change" involved redundancies, we set in place the most generous package that the armed forces has ever had and the services took terrific trouble over the arrangements for resettlement and retraining. What the hon. Gentleman said is a gross affront to the people in the services who have devoted tremendous effort to that and have had considerable success. Instead of scoring cheap political points, will he pay tribute to the people in the services who have done that work?

Mr. Martlew: I am sorry that the right hon. Gentleman was not here when I referred to his speech. I said that he spends most of his time justifying the decisions that he took when he was Defence Secretary. When he intervened, however, I was discussing the decisions of the present Defence Minister.

Northern Ireland has been discussed and I pay tribute to the work of our soldiers there. My local regiment, the King's Own Border Regiment, is just completing a two-and-a-half-year tour in Derry, where it has no doubt kept up the regiment's fine tradition. We hope that there will be peace. We sometimes see a glimmer of hope, but then there is a false dawn. Last November, some people hoped that peace would come by Christmas, but that has not happened.

If we have peace and the soldiers are brought back, the defence statement says that they will return to a peacekeeping role. After 25 years, I am worried about the peacekeeping role of those extra troops. Might not the Treasury see that as an opportunity to say, "We have won the peace—here is your P45." I do not want to make a political point out of that, but Ministers must bear in mind that peace in Northern Ireland would mean perhaps another 20,000 troops made redundant.

The hon. Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) made fun of defence diversification. There is no mention of it in the defence estimates. They mention the fact that the Army has discovered a way of freezing blood plasma. That was done for military purposes, but it will now be used for commercial purposes. The Ministry of Defence has signed a contract for that work with a Dutch company. The process was invented in Britain, but the product is to be manufactured abroad. Nothing changes, does it?

I am glad to see that the Minister of State, Home Office, the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean), is present. I am sure that he will agree that if one wants a success story of defence diversification one need go no further than Cumbria. On the west coast, there was a royal ordnance factory called Sellafield. It was used after the war for making plutonium for nuclear bombs. Now it employs 12,000 people, only 5 per cent. of them for a military purpose, the rest for peaceful purposes. Whether or not one agrees with nuclear power, that is a success story of defence diversification and it was Government directed.

We need a defence diversification agency so that we can start to exploit the peaceful aspects of the defence industry rather than giving such work to the Dutch, as the Government appear to do.

I have done some research on the position of women in the armed forces. I know that Conservative Members are upset about women being compensated for unfair dismissal. I contacted our NATO allies. The French said that they had never dismissed women because they were pregnant. The Greeks have not replied, which may have something to do with the fact that I went to Macedonia. The Italians said that they do not have such a problem because they do not allow women in their armed forces. The Netherlands said that it never dismisses women for being pregnant, as did Canada. The Norwegians said that it is illegal to dismiss women for that reason. The Portuguese said that they have never dismissed women because of pregnancy and the Belgians said that it is illegal for them to do so. The Danes said that female personnel had never been dismissed and the same situation applies in the Republic of Germany.

Mr. Brazier: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Martlew: I am sorry, but I will not give way. I have only three minutes left and I want to wind up.

Spain does not dismiss women because of pregnancy and even Turkey does not do it. The United States does not do it. In 1990 a European judgment required the United Kingdom to change the law. The bill is coming in now and it will be £20 million, £30 million or £40 million. The Government are to blame. They should have taken the advice of their NATO allies and changed the rules.

With regard to the D-day debacle, we were in great danger of changing a ceremony to honour the 10,000 people who died into some sort of fun day. Now it is back in kilter. I wrote to the Secretary of State on 16 November on behalf of the veterans in Carlisle asking for financial help and received a reply from the then Under-Secretary of State, Lord Cranborne. They were given £500 by Carlisle

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city council, but nothing by the Government. The letter from Lord Cranborne mentioned the Royal British Legion once, but gave the Southern tourist board's address. There were six more references to tourist boards, but only one to the Royal British Legion. The Ministry of Defence gave the job of organising the affair to the tourist boards of Great Britain. That is where it went wrong.

We now have a Government who do not want a policy review, a Government run by the Treasury and its Chief Secretary. Not only that—they have been played about by the tourist boards. We now have the weakest Ministry of Defence for many years: it is a good job that the Ministers who are there now were not there when the original landings were being organised, or D-day would never have got off the ground.

9.35 pm

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Jonathan Aitken): Running like a silver thread through the six and half hours of the debate has been a steady flow of tributes from hon. Members on both sides of the House to our Army and to its service men and women. I am glad to add my own accolade and that of the Government to the high and well deserved praise already expressed. I shall return to that theme at the end of my speech. In the meantime, I am happy to associate myself with the sentiments expressed by the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) at the beginning of his speech, when he said that our armed forces are the finest in the world. They certainly deserve that proud title.

However, that was the only point on which I agreed with the hon. Member for Motherwell, North, who spent 68 tedious minutes boring the pants off the House with the most feeble of knockabouts and the most flaccid of knocking copy. The only interesting moment came when he took a leaf out of someone else's book and read us a great encomium of praise for Lord Healey. I found that rather illuminating. Labour's most disastrous Secretary of State for Defence has suddenly become an icon and a guru for the new Labour Front-Bench spokesmen.

In his career as a politician, Lord Healey defied the law of averages by always getting it wrong. He predicted disaster for our armed forces in the Falklands. He was wrong about that. He predicted disaster for our forces in the Gulf war. He was wrong about that. Lord Healey scrapped the TSR2; let us remember that on the day when Eurofighter is flying proudly. He was wrong about that too. It was Lord Healey, too, who inflicted the most savage defence cuts in recent history between 1964 and 1970. He was wrong about those too. And he is the new source of inspiration for Labour Front-Bench policies.

The Opposition spokesman fell back on two slogans, both pretty familiar. One was, "Give us a proper defence review," and the other was "Down with the Treasury-led exercise, 'Front Line First'." Then he dug out a polished phrase from the Walworth road admen and said that the Government were running the British Army like a branch of McDonald's. All I can say is that when I have finished with him tonight I hope that he will feel like a sliced hamburger.

After the monotony of the opening Opposition speech, it was refreshing to hear a much shorter, more serious and statesmanlike speech from my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King), who reminded the Government of their promise to give the Army adequate resources for first-class equipment. The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) touched on that subject too, and spoke of our moral obligation in that regard.

I shall return to the subject of the Army's equipment programme later, but we can be quietly proud of the fact that we are placing a Challenger 2 order and negotiating a further extension to it, we have the AS90 order, and the Warrior order is completing. The attack and support helicopter bids are also now under negotiation or evaluation. That all adds up to a first-class equipment programme.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater was right to remind us of what can fairly be called the tension in Ministry of Defence planning between resources for peacekeeping duties and those for high-intensity conflict. It is important to realise that we are equipping our Army with a careful eye on the long term, so it is a wide-ranging capability-based Army, which has to balance its manpower-intensive peacetime operational commitments with its more fundamental role involving war-fighting capability.

Mr. Brazier: I share the concern that was eloquently expressed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King), to which my hon. Friend the Minister is referring. I put it to my hon. Friend that, while the individual orders he mentions are welcome, we are now spending the lowest proportion of the defence budget on equipment since shortly after we took office. It is difficult to see how that can be compatible with a better-equipped, high-intensity capability.

Mr. Aitken: I feel that my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) is letting his understandable frustration at having sat through the debate for six and a half hours without getting called make him say things that are rougher than are justified. The Army is pretty satisfied with the equipment programme, as I know from all levels. It is important that, whatever the money spent, we give the Army the equipment to run a high-intensity, all-arms capability at formation level—a formation that can go to war as part of NATO or some other coalition, as was the case in the Gulf.

Without that war-fighting capability—perhaps this is what my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury is afraid of—the British Army would become a mere gendarmerie, capable of providing a battalion here or a battalion there, but without the ability to go to war in a high-intensity conflict. That latter scenario is no part of the Government's vision. As my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) eloquently reminded us, the world is a dangerous place and the British Army must be prepared for the most serious of conflicts, as it has been in the past.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Sir A. Hamilton) asked me about the new Reserve Forces Bill. We hope to introduce legislation in the 1994 Session. He asked whether the two battalions in Northern Ireland were really necessary. They are required by the General Officer Commanding in Northern Ireland, although, as my right hon. Friend well knows, force levels in Northern Ireland are kept under constant review to match the changing nature of the threat.

The hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) raised a constituency point about Benbecula. He will know from my visit to his constituency and from the fact that I was glad to receive a delegation of his constituents that I am well informed on the issue and I take his points seriously, as will the Government before reaching any decision.

My hon. Friends the Members for Upminster and for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) raised the issue of training, which is most important. If the Army is not well trained, it will not have high morale and it will not for long keep its position as top of the first division of premier fighting forces of the world. Proper resourcing of the programme of Army training is a high priority for the Government. We have a major package to develop our two key training areas of Salisbury plain and BATUS. I assure my hon. Friends that we shall continue to make full use of the excellent training facilities at BATUS and to utilise all the slots available to us.

The hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) made points about what went on in the miners' strike and about Polaris; he said almost nothing about the Army. I can make one point to him. There is no question of our finding posts for redundant service men by dismissing Ministry of Defence police, and I am glad to set the record straight there.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) did the House a service by revealing the exciting contents of Mr. Larry Whitty's circular. It did, indeed, prove that the Labour party has been making an extraordinary amount of political capital out of D-day, both outside the House and inside the House, where it has tabled early-day motions criticising the Government. That is a real case of facing both ways and of humbug, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for revealing that. In response to my hon. Friend's exhortations about being more businesslike at Ministry of Defence headquarters, I can tell him that we are doing just that in the defence costs study, to which I shall turn in a moment.

I was grateful for the compliments to the Royal Anglian Regiment made by the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay). I agree with his point about the importance of extending the hand of military friendship and co-operation to the emerging democracies of eastern Europe, including Poland and Hungary. We are trying to do that through the partnership for peace programme.

I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin) feels that there can be reductions in the Procurement Executive and rationalisation of the medical services. That point was also raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell. However, I thought that my hon. Friend was being unfair when he spoke of the unsatisfactory nature of the new Territorial Army commitment to the Falklands. Contrary to his gloomy forecasts, recruiting for that particular TA platoon is going extremely well. There have already been more than 53 volunteers for the 40 places available. That is a signal that this is quite a popular move.

Many speeches tonight have dealt with the defence costs study exercise, known as "Front Line First". Indeed, almost every speaker touched on that in some way. I am glad to tell the House something about it and to turn, with some relish, to the Mutt and Jeff act on the subject from Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen. Their speeches were so bereft of constructive criticism, let alone originality of thought, that we can safely assume that Labour's shadow ministerial team has spent the past few months deeply immersed in an ideas-cutting internal exercise known as "Front Bench Last". Even further behind are their own Back Benchers. When the debate started, there was the amazing total of three Labour Back Benchers in the House, compared to 32 Members on this side, indicating that we take defence 10 times more seriously than do the Opposition.

As a substitute for any sort of understanding or comprehension of what we are about, the two Opposition spokesmen performed predictably as a couple of rather loud-mouthed, old sailor's parrots. They opened up their beaks to screech out two tired old cliches that we have heard 100 times: give us a proper defence review and down with the Treasury-led exercise. I shall deal with those two hoary, old, ornithological squawks once and for all.

As for the parrots crying "Give us a proper defence review", let me remind the House that we have had our policy review. It was called "Options for Change". My right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater reminded us, in a fine speech, that our policy is just as valid today as it ever was. We keep those policies and commitments as set out in "Options for Change" under review and the results of our analysis have been published in greater detail than ever before in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1994". That White Paper shows that the "Options for Change" policy remains fundamentally valid, although, of course, there are changes in the plans and in some of the plan details in accordance with changes in the strategic environment.

Turning to "Front Line First", I am amazed at the noises from Opposition Members suggesting that they are totally hostile to the study. Surely they do not oppose our efforts to study new methods for saving the taxpayer money and for spending it more effectively on the front line. Surely they are not opposed to the principle of trying to concentrate resources at the sharp end of defence—the front line. When they demand instead a wider defence review and they go on about the need to review our commitments, does that mean that they want to give up certain policy commitments? In which case, let them say which ones they want to give up. We wait with bated breath to hear the announcement. Or do they want to use the cloak of a defence review to fulfil their conference resolutions to make cuts in the front line? In which case, we need to be told which cuts in the front line they have in mind.

As usual, we did not get a single policy idea, except one. We did get one policy. Here it comes. Was it a bird? Was it a plane? Was it a missile? No. It was a defence diversification unit. That was the only new, original idea that the Labour party had for defence policy. For the Government, the whole point of "Front Line First", as the very name makes clear, is not to cut or diminish the operational military capability effective as the front line. I believe that we are going to succeed in that objective.

That is why I feel confident in also dismissing the Opposition's second parrot cry, which simply denounces the whole exercise as Treasury-led. Anyone who has been following "Front Line First" from the inside would gladly give credit to the best and brightest minds in the services and in the Department for the radical and lateral thinking and new ideas that have led the whole exercise internally from within the system.

I was glad that my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell was well informed on that point and paid tribute to those internal efforts. It was our own idea to take

[Mr. Aitken]

an across-the-board look at the way in which we do business in the support and administrative areas of defence to see whether we could not only makes sensible savings, but shift resources from tail to teeth.

It was our plan not only to hand pick 33 study teams, but to invite suggestions from individuals, service men, service women and departmental officials who felt that they had proposals to contribute. Those individual contributions provided the teams with a rich harvest of reforming ideas. That is not surprising because it is our own people who best understand the need to cut the costs of administration and support, to put the greatest possible resources into the front line.

Dr. Reid: May I remind the Minister that the definition of "Front Line First" and of the front line was asked for not by a Labour Member but by one of his hon. Friends, the hon. Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier), who is now here? Perhaps the Minister can explain to his hon. Friend, as his colleague could not, what the Minister means by the front line.

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend gave a very good answer and I shall give my own answer later. I was saying, to remind the House, that it was our internal people who seized the opportunity to tell us about the things that they thought that we were doing less than efficiently. Well over 3,000 individual suggestions have been received from within the services and the Ministry. Those range from suggestions about packaging standards and better uses of fax machines and computers to proposals for tri-service rationalisation, civilianisation and privatisation.

All those suggestions were passed on to the appropriate study team and many of the suggestions will be followed up in the normal course of business. Those 33 teams have been looking across the board at the defence environment and at every aspect of the way in which we manage and support the front line to see whether we can do it better and more economically.

The teams have been considering big issues such as the management of spares, on which we spend £4 billion each year, and the central organisation of the Ministry, but, at the same time, they have been examining more routine activities that do not normally receive high-level scrutiny, or certainly did not during the cold war. There are a multitude of examples, but I shall give only one or two. I have mentioned such matters as staff travel arrangements, the provision of fire cover to the three services, internal financial management, the management of our scientific research and development budget and new information technology systems.

Many clear messages have emerged from the evidence that has been given to the teams. Message No. 1 is that the Ministry of Defence and headquarters at all levels were widely seen as excessively bureaucratic, despite recent reductions in bureaucracy. Several teams have been addressing the problem in different areas and have proposed significant reforms.

Message No. 2 is that future defence operations, and hence command, training and support, are seen as being increasingly carried out on a joint service basis. In many areas, therefore, the proposed programme of reform and rationalisation will follow from that. Emerging from the studies is the prospect of scope for savings and better defence solutions.

Message No. 3—

Dr. David Clark: What is the front line?

Mr. Aitken: The parrot is on again about the front line. Let the hon. Gentleman listen to the messages and he might learn some new cries.

Message No. 3 is that reductions in the state of readiness requirements following the end of the cold war could be further and safely exploited to achieve important savings in some support areas.

Message No. 4 is that we need greater delegation. The process of delegating responsibility from the centre has not yet reached as far down the chain of management as we intended. We need to give our commanders and managers more freedom about how they meet defence objectives.

As the summarised messages from the study group show, the sheer depth and weight of the in-house activity gives the lie to the Opposition's parrot cry, "Treasury-led exercise."

Dr. Clark: Where does the front line begin?

Mr. Aitken: The hon. Gentleman keeps on about the front line. It is extraordinary that he does not know where it begins.

Dr. Clark: Perhaps the Minister will tell me.

Mr. Aitken: I shall tell the hon. Gentleman exactly. In essence, the term "front line" refers to the overall operational capability that our fighting units—warships, battalions and combat aircraft, for example—need to fulfil the military tasks placed on them. They are set out in detail in the White Paper. For that capability to be maintained, our fighting units have to be properly supported, directly or indirectly, by the remaining parts of the services and by the Ministry of Defence itself.

Support areas make a vital contribution to front-line capability. That contribution is, by and large, distinct in its nature and susceptible to separate analysis. That is precisely why we set up the defence costs study. We wish to ensure that front-line units receive the essential support that they need, but with the best value for money and at the least possible cost. I think that that is a pretty sensible definition that meets the points raised by the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith).

I have been asked a great deal about timing and when we shall make our announcement. I understand that there is a natural impatience and a natural urge to end uncertainty. Those points were well made.

A massive study that aims to improve efficiency and administrative support areas to enable our armed forces to discharge their military tasks to the full surely deserves a welcome in principle from the whole House, as it has received a welcome in principle from the services and the Ministry of Defence. They understand what we are trying to do and, on the whole, the exercise has been well supported. It certainly does not deserve to receive the sort of parish-pump whingeing and parrot cries that we have had from the Opposition. I recognise that the House will be disappointed—I hope that it will be understanding—that I am constrained from giving further details tonight. That is because the study process has not yet been completed.

I must emphasise that, contrary to some speculative press reports, no final decisions on "Front Line First" have yet been reached by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State.

The final phase will take a few more weeks to complete. I expect my right hon. and learned Friend to announce the outcome of the study well before the summer recess. We shall make the announcement as early as possible to end the uncertainty that my right hon. and hon. Friends have mentioned. I am confident—

Mr. Martlew: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Aitken: No.

I am confident that "Front Line First" will achieve the objective of making substantial savings. It will achieve the objective of improving the efficiency of defence support and administration while not diminishing—it may even succeed in enhancing—the front-line capability of Her Majesty's armed forces.

Mr. Martlew: I am grateful to the Minister for saying that the results of "Front Line First" will be announced before the recess. Does he agree that the House should have an opportunity to debate that announcement before the House rises?

Mr. Aitken: I have no doubt that the "Front Line First" proposals will be debated by the House, but the arrangement of such a debate is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. It does not help good relations between parties when, after the usual channels have arranged a debate on a date suggested by the Opposition, an Opposition Front-Bench spokesman repudiates his own Whips and says that it is unfair that the debate should be held today. That was a deplorable performance by the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew).

It follows from what I said that the "Front Line First" process will not have a negative impact on the Army. One positive aspect of our financial restructuring is that the Army's equipment programme is in robust shape. I refer particularly to the Challenger 2 tank order. I remind the House that 127 of the new, impressive Challenger 2 tanks are on order from Vickers. In December, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State announced that we expected to place an order for up to 259 more, subject to contractual negotiations. The tender for Vickers has been received and is under negotiation.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East asked me a specific question about attack helicopters. Six companies have responded to our invitation to tender with strong bids and we expect to place a contract with the winner in the middle of next year.

Several hon. Members, notably my hon. Friends the Members for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) and for Weston-super-Mare, asked the familiar question about support helicopters and the EH101 helicopter. The invitation to tender has been issued to Westland for the EH101 helicopters and to Boeing for Chinooks. We hope to have a mixed fleet, but its number and composition must depend on prices, which are under negotiation. We hope to make an announcement before the end of the year.

I am not able to go through the full equipment programme, but I should like to say that we have ordered the AS90 and that we are coming to the end of an order for about 750 Warrior vehicles. We have placed a £200 million order for long-term orders of ammunition, which has been a great boon to Royal Ordnance, although one would not think it from the comments of the hon. Member for Motherwell, North.

We shall introduce the high-velocity missile for the Army's close-air defence capability and we hope to introduce the new Rapier field standard C short-range missile system, which is expected to enter service in the Army next year. The comprehensive equipment programme for the Army is impressive and it fits the Army for the high-intensity conflict scenarios that I mentioned.

Vital though the Army's equipment programme is, its service men and service women most deserve the compliments and congratulations of the House. Some of us have had the privilege to see the Army on active service in recent months, particularly in the often perilous environments of Northern Ireland and Bosnia. I was privileged to travel with General Michael Rose for some days just before Christmas. We know that the superlative professionalism and dedication to duty of our forces earns them their unequalled high reputation and respect.

I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater that, even if the Northern Ireland commitment comes to an end, the Army is at its right strength. I do so not least having recently read David Fraser's fine biography of Rommel, in which he mentioned that the German army, even at the nadir of its fortunes after the first world war, had to stay at a strength above 100,000 because that was the minimum required for it to be able to revive and increase in number at a later date. The Army is at the right level today.

I remind the House about one particular episode that to me, and I think to many others, caused a lump in the throat and symbolised all that is finest in the ethos and achievement of the Army. I am referring to that astonishing moment on Sunday 20 March this year when the band of the Coldstream Guards, immaculate in full dress uniform, marched out in the football stadium in Sarajevo playing "The Peacemakers."

That scene was not only an imaginative and colourful initiative by a remarkable general, General Rose, about whom many tributes have rightly been paid tonight; it was a signal that peace and normality were beginning to creep back to the hitherto bombarded and beleaguered city of Sarajevo thanks to the fine generalship of General Rose. Above all, it was a spectacle that shone around the world because it symbolised the British Army's long tradition of military excellence and its proud record of getting difficult tasks well done.

Here at home, the British people responded instinctively with uplifted hearts and spirits at that Sarajevo episode because it reminded us that in today's international turbulence and strategic uncertainty—

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

AGRICULTURE

Ordered,

That Mr. Andrew Hunter be discharged from the Agriculture Committee and Mr. Roger Knapman be added to the Committee. *—[Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

EMPLOYMENT

Ordered,

That Mr. Richard Spring be discharged from the Employment Committee and Sir Ralph Howell be added to the Committee. —*[Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

LIAISON

Ordered,

That Sir James Kilfedder be added to the Liaison Committee. —*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Mr. Bryan Ruppert

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

10 pm

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Today I wish to raise the case of Bryan Ruppert. Bryan Ruppert is an American citizen. He first met his partner, David Green, in the autumn of 1989 in a translation class in Germany where they were both studying for a year as part of their degree courses. Their relationship began within a few weeks, taking them both by surprise. By the end of the year, they had already visited each other's homes, met families and friends and travelled together in Europe.

Bryan spent the last few weeks of the 1990 summer vacation with David and his family before they had to part to complete their studies. With the exception of 10 days at new year, when Bryan visited David in the United Kingdom, they were separated for 13 months. That was a most difficult time for them both as they tried to cope with the separation and their studies, as they wondered how they would be together again in the future.

David stayed at Birmingham university to do a postgraduate degree, and Bryan arranged to go to Birmingham on a British universities north America club scheme, which allowed him to work in the United Kingdom for six months. By the time they met again after the long separation, they had no idea whether the relationship would be able to last but, within a couple of weeks, everything was exactly the same as it had been in Germany. They were absolutely sure of their commitment to each other.

They decided to apply for Bryan to be allowed to stay on the basis of his relationship with David, and submitted their application in March 1992, including photographs, letters from their families and even copies of telephone bills. They were very optimistic.

The refusal came in June. They had not prepared themselves for that devastating blow. While they were trying to come to terms with it, their solicitor filed an appeal and they knew that they would have a very long wait ahead. Bryan's temporary work permit had expired at that point, and he was not able to work for 30 days, and David's studies took a turn for the worse. They had been stressed since the application was originally submitted, but this was worse still. They decided that the best way to face up to their situation was to keep busy and to gather as much support as possible for their application. They contacted me as I was their local Member of Parliament.

From the first time that I met them, I was impressed by their straightforward honesty, integrity and commitment to each other. I was not the only parliamentarian who felt that way. Bryan and David began a letter-writing campaign to peers and MPs of all political persuasions. They received many sympathetic letters of support from hon. Members and noble Lords and Ladies, and they were able to meet several of them in Westminster.

The year-long wait before their appeal was heard dragged slowly. Bryan could not leave the country even when his uncle died in January 1993. Both men were under considerable strain. It could be argued that this was a good test of the relationship, and so it was, but what a horrendous way to have to prove that a person loves someone.

The appeal was heard in September 1993. The men's submission agreed that their circumstances were not covered by the immigration rules, but pointed out that the Home Office Minister had discretion to allow leave to remain, outside the rules. The men felt confident that, if their case was examined on its merits, Bryan would surely be allowed to remain. Fortunately, the adjudicator at the appeal, Dr. Popper, agreed, and wrote a strongly worded recommendation that the Minister overrule the previous decision. The men felt that Dr. Popper argued their case so well that they simply could not see how anyone could refute it: they were overjoyed.

Clearly, Bryan and David had an established relationship that had lasted for some time, and there was no suggestion that it would not continue permanently. Their relationship is stable and loving and it was not entered into primarily to enable the appellant, Bryan Ruppert, to enter the United Kingdom. David Green owns his own house, and both men are well able to maintain themselves—there is no question of recourse to public funds.

At the appeal, reference was made to the considerable support for the application from their respective parents; it was noted by the adjudicator as genuine and warm. More support came from Bryan Ruppert's employer, from Members of all parties in both Houses of Parliament, and particularly from Lord Scarman who, in a hand-written letter, wrote:

"I cannot believe that this"—

referring to the gay relationship—

"is any reason why the application should be refused. A homosexual relationship between two consenting adults is, in itself, perfectly lawful. I know of nothing scandalous, disreputable or criminal in the conduct of either Mr. Ruppert or Mr. Green."

He went on:

"I would think that these two young men have much to contribute to their country if this application be granted."

If Bryan and David had been a heterosexual couple, they would have been able to marry. Even if they had not been, their application would have been considered outside the rules in accordance with Home Office guidelines, which state:

"Although there is no provision under immigration rules for a person to be allowed to remain in the United Kingdom on the basis of a common-law relationship with a British citizen (or person settled here), it is policy to consider granting leave to remain to such persons on the same criteria as those for married cases. In general, removal will not be enforced when the relationship appears genuine and has lasted for two years or more."

Bryan and David's relationship has lasted for four and a half years and survived a year's separation shortly after they first met. Clearly, the Home Secretary and his officials have power to grant leave to remain, outside the immigration rules, to those in heterosexual, common-law relationships. Cannot the Minister accept the sense of grievance and injustice that my constituents feel when the basis of rejection is that their relationship is homosexual?

Dealing with its own staff, the Home Office accepts the validity of same-sex relationships. In 1993, it issued a notice to staff regarding transfer allowances:

"The Department will consider paying the married staff permanent transfer allowances to single staff on the basis of an established relationship (including same-gender partnerships)."

The Home Office defines an established relationship as one in which

"the member of staff and the other person or persons have been permanent members of the same household for a period of six months".

So the Home Office recognises same-gender partnerships and has a policy for dealing with common-law relationships. Surely there is no reason why it cannot apply its own policies to gay men and lesbian women who currently have to find alternative methods of remaining together.

Although the Minister has argued that English law does not accord any legal status to those in homosexual relationships, and immigration practice merely reflects the general position, the same logic is obviously not applied to those in heterosexual common-law relationships. This policy of discrimination can only further alienate the gay community and encourage deceptions—as we saw in the case of the gay immigration officer Mark Watson, who is now in gaol simply because he wanted to be with the partner he loved.

Tonight, the Minister can respond to the debate in several ways. He can simply read out a statement prepared by his officials reiterating the view that Bryan Ruppert's circumstances are not comparable with those of a heterosexual couple, or are not sufficiently compelling to warrant the exercise of discretion outside the rules. That would again mean dismissing the adjudicator's recommendation that leave to remain be granted for Mr. Ruppert in the light of the relationship which those men have and the distress which a separation would surely cause.

Bryan and David are here tonight to watch the proceedings, and I sincerely hope that the Minister will not lightly dismiss the strong arguments in support of their application. Will he not at least offer to have another look at the case?

The recent case of Javier Lizarzaburu—which I understand may be on his desk at the moment—gives grounds for a review of the whole policy, as it governs same-sex immigration cases. Mr. Lizarzburu's appeal tribunal found that the most appropriate context in which claims for a person in a same-sex relationship should be considered was through the adaptation of the married immigration rules, and not as an application for indefinite leave. His appeal was therefore allowed.

I am asking the Minister to consider Bryan Ruppert's case on its merits. Alternatively, he can agree that lesbian and gay relationships should be treated in exactly the same way as unmarried heterosexual relationships. As I have shown, the Home Office does accept homosexual relationships, and further, such relationships have been acknowledged by the Law Lords, as in the case of Barclays Bank *v.* O'Brian, where the court set out rules to protect people who guarantee the debts of their spouses, and expressly applied that ruling to homosexual couples as well.

Same-sex partnerships have also been recognised for immigration purposes. For example, the category of "person of independent means" used to require a close connection with the United Kingdom for an applicant to be given leave to remain. In the case of Sum Yee Thong, an immigration adjudicator determined that a gay relationship did fulfil this requirement, and the Home office did not appeal against that decision.

Providing for the immigration of same-sex partners does not require a change in the law. All that is needed is a change in the guidelines, so that stable same-sex relationships fall in the same category, and are verified in the same way, as unmarried heterosexual relationships. There is not even any argument that such a change will lead to an increase in immigration, as the numbers involved are very small.

[Dr. Lynne Jones]

I sincerely hope that the Minister will see the justice in Bryan Ruppert's case in his response tonight.

10.12 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): I first congratulate the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) on obtaining this debate to discuss the case of Mr. Bryan Ruppert, a 26-year-old American citizen who has sought to remain in the United Kingdom as the homosexual partner of a British man, David Green. I recognise that the issue raised in the case may be difficult and sensitive for some hon. Members, and I do not intend tonight to discuss the general issues arising from homosexual relationships, with which we are not concerned here.

Instead, I want to concentrate on the specific matter of the position of homosexuals in the context of immigration control. The House may find it helpful to have brief details of the case to which the hon. Lady has referred. I must commend the hon. Lady for her diligence in pursuit of this case. She wrote to me about it on several occasions last year, and I have explained to her the policy which applies in cases such as this in the letters which I have sent to her.

I have also set out for her our assessment of this particular case in the light of all known circumstances, and I do not think that she added anything to those circumstances in what she told the House this evening. Although the hon. Lady is therefore fully aware of our position, both on policy and as that policy bears in this individual case, I am happy to take this opportunity to set out the position for the House.

I am also aware that Mr. Ruppert's case has attracted the interest of the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen). Furthermore, as the hon. Lady has already told the House, several noble Lords raised the case last year, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) explained the Government's position in his replies. As there have been further developments in this case since that time, the debate has provided me with a useful opportunity to record the current position.

The facts are clear enough, and so, I would submit, is our policy on how cases such as Mr. Ruppert's are considered. I recognise that the hon. Lady will not be able to agree with much of what I have to say, but I hope that she will be in no doubt about the policy by the time I have finished my remarks.

I shall deal first with the background. These are the facts of the case—the hon. Lady has outlined many of them already. Mr. Ruppert entered the United Kingdom on 22 November 1991 as a student, when he was granted leave to enter for six months on condition that he did not enter or change employment, paid or unpaid, without the consent of the Secretary of State for Employment, and did not engage in any business or profession without the consent of the Secretary of State for the Home Department. He was also admitted to the United Kingdom on condition that he would leave on completion of his studies. Those are, of course, normal conditions under the immigration rules for persons coming here as students.

In March 1992, Mr. Ruppert's representatives sought permission for him to remain here indefinitely on the basis of his homosexual relationship with a British man, Mr. David Green. His case was assessed carefully under the rules. The position is that the immigration rules make provision for the spouse of a person settled in the United Kingdom to be granted limited leave to remain. But Mr. Ruppert was not the spouse of anyone settled in the United Kingdom, and the relevant requirements of the rules had not been met.

Furthermore, an application had been made on Mr. Ruppert's behalf for leave to remain for employment, but that is a purpose for which entry clearance is required prior to entry to the United Kingdom. He was not admitted with such entry clearance, so the application was refused. Mr. Ruppert appealed against this decision to the independent appellate authorities established by Parliament to resolve such disputed matters. His appeal was dismissed on 20 October 1993. Mr. Ruppert's representatives confirmed at the appeal hearing that he was prepared to concede the case under the rules, but that he wished to call evidence to be heard in support of a recommendation.

In accordance with this request, the adjudicator formally recorded the appeal as dismissed but, upon hearing all the evidence, as the hon. Lady has described, made a recommendation to the Secretary of State for the case to be reconsidered, so that leave to remain outside the rules could be granted to Mr. Ruppert on the basis of his relationship with a British man settled in the United Kingdom—in other words, with Mr. Green.

It may be helpful if I comment briefly on the effect of a recommendation such as that made by the adjudicator after an appeal hearing. While a recommendation by an adjudicator is not binding on the Secretary of State, considerable weight is attached to it. The application was therefore reconsidered carefully in the light of the adjudicator's comments and recommendation.

As I said in my letter of 10 December to the hon. Lady, in reviewing the case my officials took account both of the recommendation and of the representations made by the hon. Lady. But, as I explained then, it was not felt that Mr. Ruppert's circumstances were of such an exceptional nature as to justify granting further leave to remain in this particular case. Mr. Ruppert's representatives then made an application for leave to move for judicial review, but that has also been refused, although I understand that the application is to be renewed.

The current position is that Mr. Ruppert has now been here for almost two years without authority. As is normal in such cases, deportation action has been commenced against him.

To complete the picture, the hon. Lady asked me to meet an all-party group of hon. Members to discuss the case. In my letter of 17 February, I explained my reasons for declining to do so. In short, as no new information had come to light in this case and there were no more developments which needed to be reviewed, I had to say that, with respect, I saw little purpose in a discussion of the kind envisaged. Finally, in my reply to a question from the hon. Lady on 15 March, I referred to the views that I had expressed earlier.

I now turn to questions of policy. It may be helpful if I explain the decision in the context of our immigration policy on homosexual relationships. As some hon. Members will already know, there is no provision in the immigration rules for a foreign national to remain in this country on the basis of a homosexual relationship. The

hon. Member for Selly Oak has made it clear that she is aware of that. Consequently, applications fall to be considered exceptionally outside the rules.

The policy on the admission of homosexuals to join or remain with a partner settled here is kept under constant review, and each application is considered carefully on its individual merits. Discretion will not normally be exercised in an applicant's favour unless compelling compassionate circumstances are present.

As hon. Members are aware, the immigration rules provide for the admission of spouses. In such cases, the very fact of marriage and the presence of children of the marriage are factors which go to establishing the genuineness of the relationship. In cases of heterosexual common-law relationships, the presence of children of the relationship, and whether the couple intend to marry, are factors which may be taken into account in deciding whether a relationship is genuine and subsisting. Clearly, such factors are not present in homosexual relationships.

As hon. Members will know, English law does not afford any legal status to homosexual relationships. Immigration practice in relation to homosexuals reflects this general position. It would be illogical to try to construct an immigration policy which did not accord with the general position. It is true that some countries do, in some circumstances, recognise homosexual relationships. But most countries, including the majority of our European Union partners, afford them no legal status.

It is quite clear that the majority of member states are not prepared to contemplate the admission of homosexual partners, and any movement away from our current policy would therefore put us out of step with them and with the resolution on family reunification policies which was signed by EU Immigration Ministers in Copenhagen in June last year.

Dr. Lynne Jones *rose—*

Mr. Wardle: I will give way to the hon. Lady in a moment.

It may be helpful if I provide the House with brief details of that resolution, which is to be applied to the family members of non-European Community nationals who are lawfully resident within the territory of a member state on a basis which affords them an expectation of permanent or long-term residence.

Under the terms of the resolution, a member state will normally grant admission to a resident's spouse and the children, other than adopted children, of the resident and his or her spouse. Other children, including adopted children, may also be admitted. Member states have also reserved the possibility of admitting other family members for compelling reasons which justify the presence of the person concerned. It is clear from what I have said that nothing in the resolution confers the right of admission to a person in a homosexual relationship with a national of a member state.

Dr. Jones: I thank the Minister for giving way. Does he agree that currently Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Australia and New Zealand recognise same-sex partnerships for immigration purposes?

Mr. Wardle: Some countries do—the hon. Lady is certainly right about Australia, Denmark and Norway—in certain well-defined cases. I think that that is a point on which she may wish to reflect.

On previous occasions when cases have been referred to the European Court of Human Rights alleging that the United Kingdom's refusal of leave to remain in the United Kingdom on the basis of a homosexual relationship constituted an unjustified interference with private life, contrary to article 8 of the convention and discrimination, compared with heterosexual couples, contrary to article 14 of the convention, they have not been upheld by either the court or the commission.

The European Commission on Human Rights has found that the absence from the United Kingdom immigration rules of settlement rights for non-nationals in respect of stable, private relationships other than family relationships does not disclose any violation of the convention.

As I told the House in my speech on 20 July last year, the Government intend to lay reformulated immigration rules. This process has taken some time, not least because we offered an extensive period of consultation, and were naturally anxious to assess fully the views of those who responded. But the process is nearing completion, and I expect to be able to lay the new rules before the House very shortly. They will not, however, make any new provision for homosexual partners. To do so would afford them, as I have already sought to make clear to the House, a status not present elsewhere in our law.

In conclusion, Mr. Ruppert's relationship with his partner is of comparatively short duration and, so far as is known, there are no compelling compassionate circumstances present in his case which would suggest that discretion should be exercised in his favour. Furthermore, nothing that the hon. Lady has said has persuaded me to change my mind.

I am, of course, very much aware of the considerable support which Mr. Ruppert's application has attracted, and due weight has been given to all the representations which have been made on his behalf. However, his application does not meet the strict criteria applied in such cases, so it will come as no surprise to the hon. Lady that I do not consider that there is any basis on which he could be allowed to remain in the United Kingdom.

As I have said, I have heard nothing this evening to persuade me to alter my view. If the hon. Lady can offer any compelling evidence in the very near future, she should do so, but I am bound to tell her that, from what she has said and what I know of the case, no such compelling evidence would persuade me to change my mind. I can see no reason to overturn the decision that has already been reached.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-four minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 5 May 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

FEDERATION OF STREET TRADERS UNION (LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES ACT 1990) (AMENDMENT) BILL (*By Order*)

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time upon Thursday 12 May.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sugar, Bananas and Rum

1. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consideration she has given, in the context of the Lomé review, to improvements to the protocols on sugar, bananas and rum; and if she will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jack): I confirm that the United Kingdom would welcome some improvements in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries' access to European Union markets for rum, sugar and bananas.

Mr. Enright: I am grateful to the Minister for that reply, but he will recognise that the general agreement on tariffs and trade negotiations, on which so much praise has been lavished, has been a disaster for many developing countries, particularly those that had special access to the European Community under Lomé. When he considers common agricultural policy reform, therefore, will he think laterally as well as longitudinally, and look to the outside as well as the inside to ensure that there is no effect on third world countries? In particular, will he persuade the rest of the Ministry of that, including his redoubtable Europhile boss?

Mr. Jack: My boss is a redoubtable person, but the hon. Gentleman's other comments are a matter for another place and another debate. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the various protocols on trade in rum, sugar and bananas between the ACP countries and the European Union are discussed by separate regimes. Difficulties have arisen with the banana regime as a direct consequence of the GATT negotiations, but sugar and rum essentially remain free of that encumbrance. In considering both GATT and the European Union-ACP relationship, we fight hard for producing countries with special interests in rum, bananas and sugar. The hon. Gentleman has a special and continuing interest in the matter and I will gladly afford him the opportunity to hold a further meeting to discuss it more fully.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: Is not the situation extremely serious for many of our former colonies which produce bananas? The banana police, or whoever supervises such matters, have not been sufficiently active. The French are subsidising their former colonies. What does the Minister propose to do to deal with the serious problem faced by the unfortunate people in our former colonies?

Mr. Jack: With respect, the serious problem with which we had to deal involved a challenge from the banana-producing Latin America countries, which lodged a complaint within GATT. That challenge has been successfully resolved. The resolution of that problem was the inhibiting factor which presented a major challenge to the opportunities available to our Caribbean producers as well as those in Africa and others associated with the European Union. Further opportunities remain for ACP banana producers to expand their commercial chances of selling their bananas in the European Union.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is the Minister aware that consumers in this country want bananas that taste like bananas? If we continually import central American bananas, which taste like soap, he will not fulfil his task in relation to the British consumer or to producers in the Caribbean, who are dependent on that crop for their income.

Mr. Jack: We have fought tirelessly for the interests of Caribbean banana producers. We are particularly aware of the acute difficulties of Belize and the Windward Islands in that respect. I take my hat off to those Caribbean states for their attempts to improve the quality of their bananas. The hon. Lady practises an unfortunate discrimination. The consumer must have freedom of choice, in which Conservative Members passionately believe.

Organic Aid Scheme

2. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are being taken to promote the new organic aid scheme.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): Once the scheme has been given approval by the Commission, we plan to give it full publicity.

Mr. Arnold: My right hon. Friend will be well aware of the excellent Luddesdown Court organic farm in my constituency. In what way will the new scheme assist farmers to bring further acreage into organic farming?

Mrs. Shephard: I am indeed aware of the excellence of Luddesdown Court in my hon. Friend's constituency. When the scheme is approved, we shall be able to increase the number of organic producers. We plan to increase their number threefold so that the excellence that my hon. Friend describes in his constituency of Gravesham will, we hope, be replicated elsewhere.

Milk Marketing

3. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the talks between her Department and the milk marketing board on the question of vesting day.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The milk marketing board has proposed a vesting day of 1 November 1994 in its reorganisation scheme.

Mr. Marshall: I am a little concerned about the reply that the Minister has just given. She has not yet stated that 1 November is a definite date. In that context, may I remind her that lethargy on the part of her Ministry has delayed vesting day by some six months and that the delay is likely to cost the dairy industry some £60 million or more? If there is a delay beyond 1 November, will she underwrite any further losses that the dairy industry is likely to suffer as a consequence?

Mrs. Shephard: I see no reason at present for speculation that the 1 November vesting day will have to be postponed. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have just been out to consultation on the board's amended scheme. Obviously, we are considering carefully all the comments that we have received before we decide whether to approve the scheme under the terms of the Agriculture Act 1993. We will make our decision as quickly as we can, within our responsibilities as outlined in the Act. The hon. Gentleman should understand—no doubt he does—that it is vital that the scheme should be right, given the importance and in some cases the vulnerability of the 29,000 milk producers in Britain and the 50 million consumers.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: First, I thank my right hon. Friend for visiting my constituency of Macclesfield last Friday. During that visit, she met a large number of representatives of the National Farmers Union, many of whom are among the 29,000 milk producers whom she has just mentioned. Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is immense support among my farmers for Milk Marque and the wonderful job that the milk marketing board has done? Is she aware that they want to be reassured that in any future system those farmers who produce milk on hill or marginal land will still be able to have their milk collected daily so that farms continue to be viable in those critical areas?

Mrs. Shephard: I greatly enjoyed my visit to Macclesfield and found my conversations with my hon. Friend's farmers of great value. I am aware of the concern among those producers, some of whom are, indeed, very vulnerable and dependent on the arrival of the milk lorry and, equally, on the arrival of the milk cheque, which is just as important. As my hon. Friend knows, the Government are sympathetic to the principle of the establishment of a single voluntary body to succeed the MMB, which has done good service for the past 60 years. That is why we are taking so seriously our consideration of the board's proposals before giving our final approval.

Mr. Tyler: In considering at what point to make her statement, will the Minister consider the possibility of obtaining a cast iron guarantee from those organisations that have indulged in delaying tactics—notably the Dairy Trade Federation—that they will not seek to delay the scheme any further after her decision by, for example, referring the matter to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission or the European Commission or seeking an injunction in the courts? Will she obtain that guarantee so that milk producers throughout the country can be assured that we can progress towards a successful conclusion of the talks?

Mrs. Shephard: I would certainly deplore any delaying tactics from whichever source they came.

Mr. John Greenway: Is my right hon. Friend aware that milk farmers in my constituency—those who are in favour of Milk Marque as well as those who wish to join some other marketing scheme—are sick and tired of the delays in ending this problem? Will she take on board not only what has been said in the House today but the many letters that I know she has received from farmers throughout the country? Does she agree that it would be wrong to put in place a scheme that could suddenly be challenged by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission or even by the European Commission and that we want a scheme that will last as long as the milk marketing board has lasted?

Mrs. Shephard: Of course the delay is unwelcome. It is also very worrying for milk producers and everyone else involved in the milk industry. My hon. Friend was right to underline the importance of getting the scheme right, particularly those aspects that might be of interest to the competition authorities.

Mr. John D. Taylor: As the first vesting date was postponed, there is no reason to assume that the new vesting date of 1 November will not also be postponed. Does the right hon. Lady accept that the longer the delay, the greater the number of producers who will sign up with other creameries? That will leave a much smaller number of producers to sign up for the revised scheme proposed by the MMB. Therefore, the delay is very damaging. Will the right hon. Lady make the very earliest decision on the revised scheme that has been submitted to her for approval?

Mrs. Shephard: I stress again that I deplore the delay. It is unsettling and sometimes has the results and effects described by the right hon. Gentleman. I assure him that no unnecessary delay will emanate from the Ministry, but we need to get the scheme right.

Farm Diversification

4. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement about the Government's policy on farm diversification.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friend has recently launched four rural economy booklets whose intention is to provide farmers with easy access to information on how to develop, diversify and improve their businesses.

Mr. Lidington: Is my hon. Friend aware that the Government's support for diversification is being threatened by an Inland Revenue decision that the various components of a diverse rural enterprise should be treated as discrete entities for tax purposes? Will he and his colleagues, both in MAFF and in other Departments, take seriously the constructive proposals from the National Farmers Union and the Country Landowners Association on how the problem might be overcome?

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend asks his question at an appropriate time because currently £70 million of farm output in England and Wales is accounted for by diversified activity. At the heart of his question lies a report by Sir Michael Bunbury, which has already been the subject of discussion with my colleagues at the Treasury. As a result of that, I understand that Sir Michael has been asked to do further work on the subject. That is where the matter rests, but I will draw my hon. Friend's concern to the attention of my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Treasury.

Common Agricultural Policy

5. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress she has made in seeking a common agricultural policy which gives better value for money.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The UK played a major part in achieving the 1992 CAP reform, which is progressively encouraging farmers to depend less on price support and more on the market.

Mr. Amess: Can my right hon. Friend reassure me that in the further negotiations on the CAP, Britain and the Commission will do everything possible to put a high priority on combating fraud, which is causing some concern to my constituents in Basildon?

Mrs. Shephard: I am happy to give that reassurance to my hon. Friend and his constituents. The people of Basildon and elsewhere in the UK feel strongly about this matter and they expect the Government to pursue fraud wherever it occurs. I assure my hon. Friend that I intend to do that with all the force of which I am capable.

Mr. Barnes: As there are now to be four new members of the European Union is it not time to get rid of the sillier features of its arrangements? The CAP certainly qualifies in that respect. Not one change to the CAP resulted from Maastricht—indeed, the treaty made no reference to agriculture. Surely we now have a great opportunity to get rid of anti-social and anti-democratic measures.

Mrs. Shephard: The common agricultural policy has a number of unwelcome features. One is that its cost is far too high and is not sustainable. We cannot expect agriculture, which represents 5 per cent. of the Community's gross domestic product, to continue to account for 54 per cent. of the EC budget. That is why the Government constantly argue that the cost of the CAP should be brought down and that some of its other features that distort the market and restrain competitiveness and innovation, such as quotas and supply controls, should be removed.

Dr. Liam Fox: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the proportion of the EC budget that has gone to maintain the CAP fell from 70 per cent. in 1988 to 50 per cent. this year? While that is a welcome move, it is not nearly enough. We must move much further in that direction because, among other things, the CAP charges taxpayers tax so that food can be sold back to them at a higher price than they would otherwise have had to pay.

Mrs. Shephard: The reformed CAP will result in reduced prices for consumers—something like £2 billion less for taxpayers and consumers in Britain by the end of the period. Nevertheless, as I said, such a high percentage —54 per cent. to benefit 5 per cent. of EC gross domestic product—is not acceptable or sustainable in the longer term.

Mr. Skinner: Does the Minister agree that it is costing approximately £28 a week for every family in Britain to sustain the CAP? Since she has the ear of the Prime Minister and speaks up for him on occasion, albeit misguidedly, as she did last weekend, can she tell us whether she has consulted him on the idea that is being floated—that there should be a referendum on Europe to resolve the Common Market problem—and tell me what the answer is?

Mrs. Shephard: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's figures, which are misguided. Nor do I agree with anything else that he says at any time, including his suggestion about a referendum.

Animal Diseases

7. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on progress on the steps taken to prevent the spread of animal diseases from abroad.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Nicholas Soames): We recently announced newly strengthened measures to monitor imports of live animals to ensure that our very high animal health status is safeguarded.

Mr. Spring: Is my hon. Friend aware of the great dangers posed by the possible importation of warbled cattle from France? Can he assure the House that the strongest possible representations are being made to French vets to ensure the continuing good health of our livestock?

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who is clearly voicing the concerns of farmers in his constituency. That matter is of profound concern to farmers and I am happy to give my hon. Friend the assurance that he seeks. A number of consignments of warbled cattle from France have been discovered through post-import checks by our vets. Following the most strenuous representations by the chief veterinary officer to his opposite number in France, the cattle have been returned whence they came.

Mr. Martyn Jones: Is the Minister aware that evidence given to me and to the Select Committee on Agriculture suggests that potentially infected imported cattle are being distributed from places other than registered dealers without any checks by Ministry officials? Will he ensure that all imported cattle can be reliably tracked within the European Union and the United Kingdom, or will we face the prospect of disease epidemics in the UK?

Mr. Soames: The hon. Gentleman is well aware of the great concern, energy and effort that the Ministry puts into the matter. I am happy to give him the assurances that he seeks. Furthermore, the regime that we have applied includes extensive checks other than those that are statutorily required. We will continue to maintain our high animal health status, which is a very high priority for the Department. I should be happy if the hon. Gentleman would be good enough to send me whatever evidence he has so that we can pursue the matter.

Mr. Marland: Is my hon. Friend aware that Gloucester market is one of those through which many warble-infected cattle have been sold and that my constituents and Gloucestershire farmers will be pleased to hear what he has said on the matter?

Is he further aware that considerable difficulties are being caused in west Gloucestershire, where cattle have caught tuberculosis from TB-infected badgers? I know that my hon. Friend is making strenuous efforts to control the infected badger population throughout the west country. Will he have a purge of TB-infected badgers in west Gloucestershire in the interests of farmers and of public health?

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend is right to say that TB in badgers is a matter of prime concern to farmers. I know from the representations that he has already made to me of the great concern felt in west Gloucestershire about it. I can assure my hon. Friend—

Mr. Barnes: Reassure him.

Mr. Soames: I can reassure my hon. Friend that the Ministry will not rest until we have managed to bring the problem under control. Because of the scale and seriousness of the problem, it takes a great deal of time to catch badgers, test them and deal with them in a humane and proper manner. We have a big problem on our hands and we must get on to it. The work of the technicians involved is not helped by those who seek to disrupt it in a fundamentally irresponsible manner.

Milk Marketing Board

8. **Mr. Hendry:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress is being made concerning the future of the milk marketing board; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I will decide whether to approve the board's reorganisation scheme as quickly as our responsibilities under the Agriculture Act 1993 allow.

Mr. Hendry: Is my right hon. Friend aware that farmers in my constituency of High Peak share the concern of other farmers at the delay in announcing the new structure for the milk marketing board? Can she reassure the House that the final structure will properly reflect the interests of the small dairy farmers and not simply the interests of large commercial milk producers?

Mrs. Shephard: One of the reasons why we need to examine the board's proposals so carefully is precisely the need to consider the concerns and interests of 29,000 milk producers, 50 million consumers and those whose business is connected with the milk industry. I greatly regret the delay, but I do not see any reason why we should put off approval after 1 November. Any sort of delaying tactics on the part of any of the parties involved will not be accepted.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it not true that if Mr. Andrew Dare and his colleagues had submitted the right scheme some time ago there would have been no delay and no need for complaints to be made in Parliament? May I ask the right hon. Lady a very simple question? Is the principle of regional crops completely off the agenda?

Mrs. Shephard: I think that the hon. Gentleman knows that the main thrust of the Agriculture Act 1993 is that there should be a strong voluntary co-operative, which also offers market freedom for other producers to sign up to sell their milk where they find it in their best interest to do so. The first submission from the milk marketing board required a great deal of work and it is true that that has caused some of the delay.

Dr. Strang: Is it not preposterous that earlier this afternoon the right hon. Lady deplored and blamed on others a delay which derives from legislation? As the Opposition argued during the passage of the 1993 Act, it is absolutely clear that if responsibility for the reorganisation scheme had been given to the Government and not to the milk marketing boards this state of affairs would never have occurred. Does the Minister accept that radical changes are no longer consistent with starting the new arrangements on 1 November?

Mrs. Shephard: The hon. Gentleman's hostility to a freer market for milk is well known and was well rehearsed during the passage of the 1993 Act. I repeat that no delay has been caused by the Ministry. We want that delay, which is causing so much anxiety to producers, to be brought to a speedy end.

Woodlands

9. **Mr. Robathan:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress she has made on reaching a conclusion on the future of woodlands owned by the Forestry Commission in England; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The report of the Forestry Review Group was submitted to Ministers on 28 February. We are now considering the report carefully and will make an announcement in due course.

Mr. Robathan: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that answer. Current Forestry Commission policy takes due account of landscape protection, nature conservation and broad-leaved planting. Many of my constituents in Blaby are concerned that any future plans arising from decisions of the Forestry Review Group should take due account of those issues and especially of the so-called freedom to roam and of access to forests. Will my hon. Friend please reassure my constituents on those matters?

Mr. Jack: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for mentioning that matter on behalf of his constituents, who enjoy opportunities to roam freely, as he said, in the existing forest environment. We asked the Forestry Review Group to consider that specific issue and have received about 3,600 individual representations, all emphasising people's anxieties about this important matter. Ministers now considering that report will bear fully in mind the representations of my hon. Friend and others.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Is my hon. Friend aware of representations that we are receiving from our constituents —and, in my case, people living in Norfolk—about access to Forestry Commission woodlands? Will he reassure my constituents and others who are genuinely worried about that matter?

Mr. Jack: I can certainly underline what I have just said in reply to the question put to me by my hon. Friend the

Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan)—that this has been one of the central issues that the Forestry Review Group has considered. In addition to the 3,600 individual representations, about 600 organisations have made representations, many of them emphasising their anxieties about the central issue to which my hon. Friend referred. I can say to him unequivocally that the importance of the point is lost neither on the Forestry Review Group nor on Ministers, who are considering it.

Dr. Strang: But surely the Minister understands that hundreds of thousands of people in this country enjoy walking and cycling—indeed, they enjoy doing all sorts of things in our state forests. Surely he also understands that when a state forest is privatised, public access is restricted or totally prohibited. Whether it is in relation to forestry, railways or local government services, is the Minister aware that the vast majority of the people of the country are fed up with privatisation, and that that is only one reason why so many of them will vote against the Conservative party today?

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman's question shows that he definitely cannot see the woods for the trees. I shall not comment on what he and his hon. Friends may be doing in the woods, but I repeat that Ministers are considering the conclusions to be reached from the results of the work of the Forestry Review Group. He will know that, in cases where forest land has been sold, a safeguard to access already exists in the form of access agreements reached with local authorities before the sale of that land. Sadly, the opportunities have not been taken up as widely as they might have been. Whatever the results of the review may be—and those results have not yet been decided—those mechanisms exist to protect the important rights of access for the enjoyment of our citizenry.

I think that when members of the public reflect on the broad-based, full exercise that we are conducting in considering forestry arrangements, they will consider supporting us through the ballot box this afternoon.

Agricultural Tenancies

11. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress is being made concerning reform of the agricultural tenancy laws.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The details of new legislation are being finalised. We are keen to introduce legislation as soon as parliamentary time is available.

Mr. Bates: I am grateful for that answer, but does my right hon. Friend accept that the widespread agreement among all interested organisations last December clearly demonstrated that it is widely recognised that there is an urgent need for agricultural tenancy reform—a need to which we should respond?

Mrs. Shephard: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend that there is real need for reform. He may know that the agricultural valuers produced a survey which demonstrated that, when tenancies end, only 10 per cent. of landlords who have a free choice choose to re-let holdings on full tenancies. In other words, the lack of reform is paralysing that sector of the industry. It was very good news that all the organisations concerned reached agreement last December, which is why we hope to build on that agreement by pressing for parliamentary time.

Mr. Bellingham: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in Norfolk and East Anglia, where many young people want to go into farming, there is a problem with the availability of tenancies? Does she also agree that, so long as we achieve complete agreement on all sides, there should be complete freedom of contract for all new tenancies?

Mrs. Shephard: Yes. We do, indeed, need reform to increase lettings. We want to increase opportunities for new entrants and to help the industry to respond to market and policy changes. There is no reason why arrangements between landlords and tenants in that sector should differ substantially from such arrangements in other sectors.

Livestock Identification

12. **Mr. Heppell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received about difficulties experienced in the industry with livestock identification systems.

Mr. Soames: A lengthy consultation exercise was held last year on the proposals to implement EC directive 92/102 on the identification and registration of livestock. There were 60 responses to the consultation document, and many meetings with interested organisations. Their views have been taken into consideration.

Mr. Heppell: Have not the present arrangements for tracing animals to control fraud and outbreaks of disease proved to be inadequate? Has not the Government's mishandling of the new system caused a delay, with the result that the new arrangements will be implemented not on 1 July but on 1 November, four months later than expected?

Mr. Soames: The hon. Gentleman is right in one respect only: plainly, the scheme is important not only for the prevention of fraud but for the control of disease. Following the consultation exercise with the industry, we have been in close and regular contact with the industry organisations on the detailed arrangements. Our aim is to achieve a smooth transition to the new arrangements. To that end, we have decided to allow an extra three months, between 1 July and 30 September this year, during which calves may be marked with either new or old-style ear tags. The hon. Gentleman is wrong to describe that arrangement as having been a muddle. It has been carried out in an orderly, sensible and proper fashion, allowing people the right amount of time to get organised.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I welcome the news that EC directive 92/102 is being given more time to be considered, but would point out that it is one of a series of alterations to cattle identification that have taken place in the past few years. Will my hon. Friend assure the House that it will be the last alteration for some time and that the system will be clear when it is altered?

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend will agree that the position will be perfectly clear when that regime comes into play. I can reassure him that we take seriously the point that he makes, which is consistent with the fact that, to protect the consumer and prevent fraud, the correct identification of cattle throughout the European Union is a matter of cardinal importance.

Mr. Jim Marshall: Is there evidence to indicate that cattle from English farms are going through the Province of Northern Ireland into the Republic and then being transported to other parts of the European Union?

Mr. Soames: I have read the reports to which the hon. Gentleman alludes and I think that it is inherently unlikely that anything so complicated could be dreamed up.

Mr. David Nicholson: Will my hon. Friend confirm that something along the lines of this particular scheme, together with the burdensome but necessary integrated administration and control system, is vital to control fraud and assure proper allocation of Community money, as referred to in an earlier question? As a member of the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, which has occasionally delivered the odd brickbat against my hon. Friend's Department, may I say how much farmers in my constituency and elsewhere appreciate the help that they received last year and, we hope, will receive this year, from departmental officials in responding to those complex schemes for the evasion of fraud?

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is right to pay tribute to the work of the regional offices of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the marvellous staff, who do a tremendous job in assisting farmers with those schemes, which are—as he knows because he has been in close touch with us on those matters—more complicated than we would wish. The schemes are essential and it is our intention to ensure that they are pragmatically, efficiently and sensibly handled. To that end, I am glad to have my hon. Friend's endorsement of the steps that we have taken to introduce the animal identification scheme in a sensible and orderly manner.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

13. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will report on progress on the introduction of the new environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Jack: I am pleased to be able to confirm to the House that six new environmentally sensitive areas were launched on 16 March, bringing the total number in England to 22. Those cover more than 1 million hectares or 10 per cent. of English farmland.

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend is aware of the beautiful countryside of Surrey in which my constituency is located and so will appreciate my constituents' great interest in environmental matters. How much is he spending on the new environmentally sensitive areas and how much is he spending on environmental protection generally?

Mr. Jack: I hope that many of my hon. Friend's constituents will be able to enjoy the delights of the environmentally sensitive areas, particularly those in the upper Thames region. Current expenditure will be £18 million, and, with the enlargement to 22 environmentally sensitive areas, that sum will increase to £43 million in 1995-96. In that financial year, the proposals will take their part in a programme valued at more than £100 million, which covers a wide range of environmental schemes.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Has the Minister heard stories of some very large payments of hundreds of thousands of pounds being made to some farmers in various parts of the United Kingdom? Is he absolutely satisfied that the amounts of money that are being paid in some cases are warranted?

Mr. Jack: The word "stories" implies a lack of precision and a great deal of rumour. I have had reports of accurate payments to farmers. Under the integrated administration and control system, arable area payments have been correctly and properly administered. If the hon. Gentleman has stories about that scheme or about environmentally sensitive areas and lets me know, I will look into them.

Mr. Alan Howarth: In considering environmental sensitivity, will my hon. Friend bear in mind the fact that a large number of people suffer from hay fever? Oilseed rape is a particularly virulent source of that affliction. Will he seek to balance the interests of farming prosperity with the interests of the health and well-being of people who live in country areas and pursue work through the research councils with a view to ensuring that this unfortunate by-product of some of our staple crops is reduced and perhaps eliminated?

Mr. Jack: I can confirm that there is much research going on in that subject. I feel that the thrust of my hon. Friend's question is better directed to the Department of Health and to those who issue weather and pollen forecasts. There is much interest in growing oilseed rape, which is an important crop for our farmers. There are other ways of dealing with the problems encountered by individuals.

Mr. Nicholls: I welcome that reply, but does my hon. Friend accept that environmentally sensitive areas and other forms of area designation must be considered in conjunction with industry's legitimate needs? If we pay too much attention to the environment—given the pressures that can exist—we can sometimes positively damage rather than enhance it. Unfashionable though it may be to say it, we must achieve the right balance.

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend may have noted that implicit in an earlier answer that I gave on farm diversification was the message that we want economic activity to develop in the countryside. Part of the key to achieving that is to take a sensible and flexible approach to planning. My hon. Friend will be pleased to know that the Ministry is involved in seminars dealing with those particular issues. The Department of the Environment is aware of the sensitivities of the matters that lie at the heart of my hon. Friend's question.

Fruit and Vegetables

14. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 19 April, *Official Report*, column *443*, what was the cost to the EC of destruction and disposal of fruit and vegetables in 1991-92.

Mr. Jack: Based on information provided by the Commission, the total cost to the European Union of withdrawing all eligible produce throughout the Community in 1991-92 was £104.35 million.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Is not it sickening that that vast sum is being spent on the destruction of 751,000 tonnes of fruit and vegetables for the sole purpose of keeping prices high, thereby damaging the poorest families in the land? Rather

than just deploring this cruel nonsense, could not the Government say that there is no way that they will present any legislation to the House of Commons to increase the resources of the Economic Community until something is done about this nonsense, which is sickening and wrong?

Mr. Jack: Had my hon. Friend been here a little earlier, he would have heard what I said in response to other questions about the efforts that this Government have made to control European Union spending and the agriculture budget. On the question of the intervention scheme for fruit and vegetables, we are at one with my hon. Friend in seeking radical reform of the regime. It is doing significant damage to the prospects of our apple growers, for example, and in the Council of Ministers we are pursuing that line of argument very vigorously indeed.

Mrs. Lait: What progress is being made in the talks in the Council of Ministers about the fruit and vegetable regime?

Mr. Jack: We are currently preparing a detailed submission about the types of reforms that we should like to see in this area. We have listened very carefully to the industry. I know that the industry understands that if its objective to receive a grubbing-up grant is to be achieved, for example, we must also have a parallel development in the form of the removal of the intervention scheme, particularly as it affects apples.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 5 May.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Lidington: In marking this month the 50th anniversary of R. A. Butler's Education Act, will my right hon. Friend reaffirm the Government's commitment to ensuring that every child in this country receives a rigorous, demanding and high-quality education? Will he reaffirm the Government's commitment to enlarging choice and opportunity for parents and pupils alike?

The Prime Minister: That Act was certainly a very revolutionary Act of Parliament, and one which has made a great difference to our education system over the years. At that time, eight out of 10 children left school at age 14. Thankfully, today almost one in three children go on to higher education. What we need to do—I hope that this is a view shared by the whole House—is build on that achievement by giving parents more choice, raising standards in schools and creating opportunities for every child to make the most of his or her abilities.

Mr. John Smith: Can the Prime Minister tell us why changes in gas pricing are being planned which will put substantial increases on the gas bills of 12 million ordinary people—the very same people who will have to pay 8 per cent. VAT this year and 17.5 per cent. next year? Does not he think that they are paying enough already?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman would be wise to wait and find out what really happens. I have seen myself the newspaper reports on which he is no doubt basing his remarks. I understand that the gas regulator believes that there is no evidence to back up those claims and that the director of the Gas Consumers Council has said that British Gas was scaremongering.

Mr. John Smith: If the Prime Minister is so confident about that, can he specifically deny that pensioners on a basic rate pension will face a 21 per cent. increase in their gas bills? Can he give them that guarantee today?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is yet again—

Mr. Campbell-Savours: We want a guarantee.

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman will wait. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is yet again taking a story and attempting to erect a scare to frighten vulnerable people. He knows very well that the Department of Trade and Industry and the gas regulator will be issuing a consultative document shortly.

I suggest that, before he peddles more scares, the right hon. and learned Gentleman should have the grace to wait for that document. I also remind the House that British Gas tariff prices were reduced from July 1992, reduced further from October 1992 and have fallen by more than 4 per cent. in cash terms and 6.5 per cent. in real terms in the past year.

Mr. John Smith: Does not the Prime Minister recognise that the Gas Consumers Council has not only complained; it has pointed out that the consultative document was agreed last month but is being delayed because of today's elections? Does not the Prime Minister understand that delaying bad news until after elections is the sort of behaviour that is bringing the Conservative party into the disrepute for which it will suffer at the polls today?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is earning himself a deserved reputation for smears that will do him and his party no good. What is proposed in due course is a consultative document that will be published shortly. The right hon. and learned Gentleman would be wise to wait until he reads that consultative document; he would be wise not to misrepresent it and he would be wise to remind everybody how real prices in gas have fallen as a result of measures taken in the past.

Mr. Wilshire: Does my right hon. Friend share my contempt for those who seek to make £1 million from the sale of secretly taken photographs, irrespective of whether the victim is a member of the royal family or an individual private citizen? What steps can the Government take to stop people in Britain profiting from such despicable behaviour?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend will speak for millions of people in this country in the remarks that he has made. I will reflect on the second half of his question.

Q2. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 5 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. and learned Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Janner: Does the Prime Minister accept the view of senior defence chiefs that, as a result of cuts in the defence budget, Britain could no longer mount an operation even on the scale of our part in the Gulf war? Is not it a grotesque betrayal of this country that his party, which has so long and so wrongly accused the Labour party of stripping Britain of its defences, has now done just that?

The Prime Minister: For years, the hon. and learned Gentleman's party and Front-Bench spokesmen have sought to strip Britain of its nuclear weapons, dismantle a large part of its armed forces and cut down substantial expenditure on the armed forces. The one party in Parliament that consistently ensures this country's capacity to defend itself is this party—and this Government. That has been the case in the past, it is the case now and it will remain the case in future, however much the hon. and learned Gentleman tries to distort reality.

Mr. Ashby: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is a solution to the sale of photographs of Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales for £1 million: we could swiftly introduce a privacy Bill and ensure that there is no public interest defence available in that Bill?

The Prime Minister: I note carefully my hon. Friend's suggestion.

Q3. **Mr. Heppell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 5 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Heppell: In view of the latest Home Office estimates suggesting that it will cost £475 million to issue identity cards in Britain, with ongoing costs of £50 million to £100 million each year, is the Prime Minister now prepared to abandon his scheme and put some of that money into my constituency, which is sixteenth in the whole of Great Britain in terms of unemployment? Would not the money be better spent on the regeneration of the city of Nottingham?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman neglected to mention that unemployment has fallen 27 per cent. in his constituency.

Mr. Heppell: No.

The Prime Minister: I beg the hon. Gentleman's pardon. It has fallen in his constituency, but in the constituency of the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Hanson), who may not mention unemployment, it has dropped 27 per cent. On the question raised by the hon. Gentleman, I made it clear the other day that we are examining the question of identity cards, and I think that if the hon. Gentleman were to go to his constituency and ask his constituents, he would find a very high level of support for the principle of identity cards provided that we are able to overcome the practical difficulties in introducing them.

Mr. Hendry: Has my right hon. Friend had the chance to look at this week's figures which show a dramatic reduction in the number of home repossessions and which come on top of figures showing that the number of families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation has fallen by two thirds in the past two years, and that the number of people sleeping rough on the streets of London is also down by two thirds? Does not that show that the Government's policies to tackle homelessness are clearly working?

The Prime Minister: Yes, the figures are certainly very encouraging. There is no doubt that the number of repossessions has been falling for some time, and fortunately shows signs of continuing to fall. Moreover, the housing market seems to be picking up, and new construction orders are on the increase.

This is all part of the much brighter economic picture that is becoming clearer as day succeeds day.

Q4. **Mr. Hanson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 5 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hanson: I hope that the right hon. Gentleman has the right answer this time.

Is the Prime Minister aware that, according to its chief executive, the Child Support Agency is now collecting less than the DSS did last year? Is he further aware that, on top of the fact that the CSA is chasing millions of the wrong people and causing misery to many more, and the fact that it has cost £146 million to set up, it is time for a review of the agency so that it can start to chase the right people who are paying nothing at all?

The Prime Minister: If I heard the hon. Gentleman correctly, he might care to check his figures before asking any future questions. The agency is bringing in a significant new system from scratch. That system has broad support right across the House and beyond it. It is in its first year—the first of a series of years in which the strategy will be examined. I do not think that it can be compared simplistically with past figures. We are seeking to bring in a new system that is right in principle. I have made it clear before, and I reiterate now, that, if there are any wrinkles, we will keep them under examination and correct them.

Mr. King: Is my right hon. Friend aware—further to his answer to a question about whether we could fight the Gulf war now on our present defence programme—that if we followed the policy of the Labour party, which proposes a £6 billion cut in our defences, it would be impossible to provide our forces with the equipment that they need? With the new order for Challenger tanks, with the Warrior, and with the European fighter aircraft, the answer to the question about the Gulf war is surely a definite yes: we would be well equipped for any such future campaign.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend speaks with the authority of a former Secretary of State for Defence, and I entirely agree with what he had to say. A great many extra resources have been put into providing the best, most modern equipment for our armed forces.

Mr. Tony Banks: No, they have not.

The Prime Minister: A great deal of expenditure has been put into providing the best equipment for the armed forces. If the hon. Gentleman does not think so, perhaps he will go and ask Vickers and some other companies what they think they are producing.

Q5. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 5 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Eastham: In 1988, the Government decided that they would allow pensioners claiming rebates to have £3,000 in savings. Since then, the figure has never been index-linked, and in relative values it would now be worth £3,960. When will the Government review it?

The Prime Minister: The figure is reviewed from time to time. I am not entirely sure that the hon. Gentleman is correct to say that it has not been changed since 1981. It is reviewed on each occasion on which we look at the uprating of pensions and other social security benefits.

Mr. Sykes: I know that the Prime Minister is aware of the grim tragedy that overwhelmed my constituency in the early hours of this morning, when a 33-year-old mother and her baby were killed in a fire at a DSS hostel in Scarborough. In March, the Government announced that they would consider a licensing scheme for such hostels. In view of this distressing incident, will the Prime Minister ask the Secretary of State to proceed with that scheme as a matter of urgency?

The Prime Minister: I was very concerned to hear about the tragic loss of life and the appalling injuries in the fire. We are, as my hon. Friend intimates, investigating the feasibility of introducing a licensing system to control such establishments. There are of course wide-ranging powers for local authorities to enforce fire safety standards in such hostels, and a full inquiry by the fire brigade into the cause of the blaze has already begun. I will of course look carefully at my hon. Friend's request.

Q6. Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 5 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Prentice: Can the Prime Minister tell us why his Government are failing to collect the £240 million a year in national insurance contributions due from employers, as outlined in today's *Financial Times*? Is not this another example of the waste and inefficiency of the Government that the right hon. Gentleman leads? Why does not he do something to ensure that that money is collected, instead of slapping massive tax increases on ordinary families?

The Prime Minister: The Inland Revenue certainly tries to collect all the tax that is available. That has always been the case. If tax is due, everything is done to ensure that it is paid. I hope that the hon. Lady will address her strictures also to the large number of Labour authorities that do not collect rents or council taxes and have run up quite shocking debts—not on one or two isolated occasions, but on a very large number of occasions.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Like Westminster.

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman who has shouted "Like Westminster" wants to know which local authorities have rent arrears, I shall tell him: Hackney, run by Labour; Southwark, run by Labour. One could extend the list. Seven out of the top 10 authorities on it are run by Labour. They do not collect rents or council taxes and are just plain inefficient.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Yes, Madam. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 9 MAY—Motion on the Draft Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.

Motion on the Visiting Forces and International Headquarters (Application of Law) (Amendment) Order.

Motion on the International Headquarters and Defence Organisations (Designation and Privileges) (Amendment) Order.

Motion on the Merchant Shipping (Ro-ro Passenger Ship Survivability) (No. 2) Regulations.

Motion on the immigration (European Economic Area) Order.

Motion to take note of EC Documents Nos. 10166/93 and 11317/93 relating to aid for restructuring the Italian steel industry. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motion to take note of EC Document No. 6703/88 relating to equal pay and equal treatment (burden of proof). Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

TUESDAY 10 MAY—Progress on remaining stages of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill.

WEDNESDAY 11 MAY—Opposition Day (12th allotted day) (first part). Until seven o'clock, there will be a debate entitled "Europe and the Environment" on an Opposition motion.

Debate on the Procedure Committee report on "Parliamentary Scrutiny of Deregulation Orders" on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

THURSDAY 12 MAY—Conclusion of remaining stages of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill.

FRIDAY 13 MAY—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 16 MAY—There will be debate on the European Union on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee B will meet at 10.30 a.m. on Tuesday 10 May to consider the presidency report on the results of negotiations on the accession of Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden to the European Union and the draft accession treaty.

[Relevant documents:

Monday 9 May:

European Community documents: 10166/93 and 11317/93 State aid to the steel industry; Relevant European Legislation Committee Report: HC 48-iv (1993-94). European Community document: 6703/82 Burden of Proof (Equal opportunities); European Legislation Committee Reports: HC 43-xxxiv (1987-88), HC 15-iv (1988-89), HC 15-xxv (1988-89), HC 79-i (1992-93) and HC 48-v (1993-94).

Tuesday 10 May:

European Standing Committee B—European Community documents: (a) Presidency report and addendum on results of negotiations on the accession of Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden to the European Union; (b) Draft accession treaty. European Legislation Committee Reports: HC 48-xiv (1993-94) and HC 48-xv (1993-94).]

Mrs. Beckett: I thank the Leader of the House for his statement.

May I ask the right hon. Gentleman to try to arrange an early statement on the impact on gas prices of the changes that are currently being considered? The Prime Minister has just told us that we are scaremongering when we raise the issue of the impact of these changes on low-income families—indeed, on all families—but, as disgraceful scaremongering is what he said we were engaging in when we said that VAT might be extended if the Conservative party were to win the last general election, this does not exactly strike confidence in our hearts. Thus, we should like to have an early statement on the issue.

Secondly, I should like to ask the Leader of the House to try to persuade the Secretary of State for Health to make a statement about the increase of 50 per cent. in the number of complaints about the health service. I realise that this will be difficult, as the right hon. Lady does not care to come to the House. It will be within the recollection of all hon. Members that the increase to which I refer is completely contrary to the statements that the right hon. Lady repeatedly makes about growing confidence in the health service. It would be helpful if she could be brought to the House to explain the discrepancy between her statements and the facts.

Finally, I noticed the Lord President's reference to consideration of the enlargement of the European Community. Will the right hon. Gentleman reconsider the Government's decision that that debate should be held in Standing Committee B? As I know he will recall, in March the Select Committee on European Legislation said that it had no hesitation in recommending that that debate be taken on the Floor of the House because the issues that it raised were so important. I know that it is a matter of concern to hon. Members in all parts of the House.

Mr. Newton: I entirely reject the right hon. Lady's observation and notion that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health is unwilling to come to the House when it is appropriate. Of course I shall draw the right hon. Lady's request to my right hon. Friend's attention.

The right hon. Lady spoke about gas prices and acknowledged that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had just commented on that matter. I remind her that the word "scaremongering" was introduced by way of a quotation by the director of the Gas Consumers Council. The right hon. Lady might like to bear that in mind.

The right hon. Lady spoke about my announcement of a debate in European Standing Committee B on accession matters. Perhaps I may straightforwardly explain the problem. As is readily ascertainable from today's newspapers, the European Parliament only yesterday gave its assent to the treaty, and a formal decision may be expected at the Foreign Affairs Council on 16 and 17 May.

The only practicable way that we could see to undertake debate in the relatively short time available was in European Standing Committee B. The House will also bear in mind that I have announced for Monday week a wide-ranging debate on European matters as a whole, in which accession matters could be referred to.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Has my right hon. Friend noticed that Chancellor Kohl of Germany has invited the European Parliament to participate in the discussions on the reshaping of Europe up to the treaty

re-examination of 1996? Has my right hon. Friend given some thought, or would he like to before the debate on the European Union, to ways in which national Parliaments, and particularly this national Parliament, can also participate in that process, as suggested in the Maastricht treaty?

Mr. Newton: I had indeed noticed those reports, and I shall give thought to the matter that my right hon. Friend raises. I merely observe wryly that my experience over the past couple of years is that hon. Members find many ways to express their views on these matters.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Does the Leader of the House accept that, now that the normal working relationship has been re-established between the Government and the official Opposition following the recent period of attrition between the two Front Benches, this would be a good moment to try to establish common ground on both sides to get reform of procedures of the House? Would he convene a meeting of the interested parties to see what common ground there is in advance of a debate on the Standing Orders that would be necessary to reform our procedures?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the way that things were moving before the usual channels were broken. Of course, I hope to resume progress in the way that was then indicated. I know that the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) will not mind if I advert to the fact that I have already had informal words with her about, if you like, resuming talks about talks. I shall undertake to have such talks with the hon. Gentleman as well.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): My right hon. Friend will have heard the exchanges earlier about the possible unfortunate publication of photographs of the Princess of Wales. Requests were made for legislation on privacy. I would not support a privacy Bill, but does my right hon. Friend accept that the measures on bugging and the intrusion of telephoto lenses and one or two others that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage has suggested require the urgent consideration of the House?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will have heard my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister undertake to reflect on points that were made, I think twice, during Prime Minister's questions. I am sure that the Prime Minister will also wish to reflect on my hon. Friend's slightly different remarks.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that it has been shown that the London borough of Newham and its people have been defrauded of £20 million of expenditure under the Government's formula for local government grant? Is he also aware that, nationally and in Newham, it is believed that the formula is fixed to favour Conservative councils? If he cannot refute that now, will he please say when we may have a debate in which it can be demonstrated?

Mr. Newton: I will observe only that I can think of quite a number of areas, where the council is under different control, where they equally believe that the rules are rigged to help some other kind of authority. It is a field in which the difficulties are well known. I will draw the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): As the House knows, I have been drawing to the attention of the House the amount of money that is wasted in this place. Will my right hon. Friend call an urgent meeting to find out why so many of the filing cabinets in the Palace of Westminster—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is a long-serving parliamentarian, and he knows that the Leader of the House should not be asked questions about House matters during business questions. Those questions should be put to the Leader of the House during his own Question Time. This is about the business for next week, not House matters or filing cabinets. [An Hon. Member: "He wants to ask about business for next week."] I know what the hon. Gentleman wants, but if he is not capable of phrasing his question properly, I am not out to help him to do so.

Mr. Steen: I found that advice very helpful.

Could I ask the Leader of the House whether we could have a debate early next week on why the filing cabinets in the Palace of Westminster are to be scrapped—they do not contain an anti-tilting mechanism as recommended by EEC directives? Will he consider why we must replace all the desks in the Palace of Westminster—they are not high enough—and why every power point in the Palace of Westminster must be numbered, because of the electricity at work regulations, which are not compulsory, merely advisory? Surely we should put our own house in order here, and not allow officials to run this place, spending public money.

Mr. Newton: I cannot, despite my hon. Friend's blandishments, promise a debate, but I can promise to bring his remarks to the attention of the appropriate Committee and, indeed, the House authorities. I will endeavour to ensure that I am able to respond to him in some other way.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): The Leader of the House will have read this week the report prepared by the Carers National Association, "Community Care: A Fairy Tale". I am sure, therefore, that he will be prepared to ask the Secretary of State for Health to come to the House next week to discuss why nearly one third of the people in need of assessments have not received them, and why many of them do not even know that community care exists. That is a horrifying situation. Will he please see that we debate it next week?

Mr. Newton: As it happens, because of my previous ministerial record, I know the people concerned with the Carers National Association very well, and, indeed, respect them, but, on this front, I simply do not agree with them. The foundations have been laid and are beginning to produce a significant improvement in care. I am bound to say that some of the voluntary organisations in my constituency have acknowledged that very clearly in meetings with me.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Has my right hon. Friend seen early-day motion 1158, which refers to myself?

[That this House deplores the remarks alleged to have been made by the honourable Member for the Isle of Wight

[Mr. Barry Field]

during a discussion on the revitalisation of Coventry's city centre by members of the Select Committee of the Environment and reported in The Sunday Mercury and The Coventry Evening Telegraph; notes that the honourable Member for the Isle of Wight is reported to have interjected and said 'Bomb it again'; and therefore, demands that the honourable Member for the Isle of Wight withdraw his tasteless remarks and apologise to the people of Coventry who suffered greatly from Luftwaffe bombing raids during the War and whose courage was a symbol of hope, peace and reconciliation for the world.]

Can we have a debate on that as soon as possible, as the transcript of evidence of the Environment Select Committee does not contain the alleged remarks referred to in that early-day motion and, because of the rules of the House, the evidence cannot be made available to the press probably until the autumn when the report is published, and neither the media nor the public understand those rules, or how it is possible for an early-day motion to be laid before the House about proceedings which are not yet publicly available, and which even my right hon. Friend is not able to see?

Mr. Newton: It is certainly the case, of course, that, not being a member of the Select Committee, I would not have been able to see the document to which my hon. Friend referred, but I am very ready to accept his assurances about what he did or did not say. As it happens, I have in front of me a line to take—in the helpful way in which such things are provided—which says:

"It is hardly for me to comment on reports of remarks in local newspapers. My hon. Friend the Member for the Isle of Wight is quite capable of looking after himself."

I think that he has confirmed that.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a debate in the very near future about the role of the United Nations and the changing patterns, where it expects regional organisations to do some of the policing in their regions? It would allow us to clarify issues and, at the same time, encourage nations in the United Nations that vote and thereafter do not participate. In particular, may I draw attention to the situation in Rwanda, where the Organisation of African Unity could do more to protect the Rwandan people?

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his thoughtful and thought-provoking remarks. Although they do not enable me to promise a debate, I am sure that they will be studied with interest by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): The European Commission issued yesterday and today the most harsh quotas under Chinese trade restrictions—approved by the EC, but voted against by the Government. The PMS company of Southend has been told to reduce its business from £14 million to £3.5 million, although it employs 200 people, is a good employer and is expanding. Will my right hon. Friend ensure that, next Thursday, the House can have some discussion of those lunatic trade restrictions introduced by the EC, which simply destroy jobs and do no good to anyone?

Mr. Newton: In view of my hon. Friend's strong constituency interests, I well understand why he raised that matter. I am mildly puzzled by his reference to next Thursday, but he could be provided with opportunities to raise the issue during Department of Trade and Industry questions on Wednesday 11 May, or in the European Union debate that I announced for Monday 16 May.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House ensure that a statement is made by the appropriate Minister about the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, which will be before the House again tomorrow, when only limited time will be available? Last Friday, the House voted unanimously for the Government to progress that Bill, which would help about 10 million disabled people to enjoy equal rights.

In view of today's scandalous report that the House will rise on 15 July, will the Leader of the House give a reassurance that at least one day, but certainly enough time necessary, will be available to allow the Bill to pass? If the House can tool up in the middle of July for three months, surely to God there should be enough time to get through that Bill for disabled people?

Mr. Newton: I note the hon. Gentleman's comments. I would not wish to excite his hopes or those of others over speculation concerning 15 July. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People has made absolutely clear throughout the Government's wish to make constructive progress in a practical way in improving opportunities for disabled people. He will seek to advance that general cause with his comments tomorrow.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for the Secretary of State for Transport to make a statement to the House on the costs of rail privatisation, and explain how £446 million has been spent so far on that totally unnecessary and unwanted measure? The Secretary of State could also acknowledge that, for a fraction of that cost, the line could have been electrified beyond Shrewsbury, Wellington station could have been refurbished, and the freight line to Donington and our InterCity links could have been reinstated. That would seem far better value for money.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman's figure of £446 million bears no relation to any that I recognise. Leaving that aside, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will be in the House to answer questions next Monday.

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): My right hon. Friend will be aware that the House debated the Army yesterday. Some three dozen of my right hon. and hon. Friends attended, and many of us were disappointed that we were unable to contribute. Notwithstanding the remarks earlier of the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner), there was almost no one on the Opposition Benches, and Labour's Front-Bench spokesman had to speak for 69 minutes to conceal his colleagues' absence.

Will my right hon. Friend provide time for a further debate on the armed forces, so that those of us who are concerned about the defence of this country may be able to speak on the subject—and so that Labour Members, who have no interest in the defence of the realm, can be exposed yet again?

Mr. Newton: Not having been present myself to a great extent yesterday, I am interested to hear my hon. Friend's comments. I did not find them particularly surprising. Even

so, I cannot promise a further debate in the near future —but my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will be answering questions next Tuesday.

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): I seek the assistance of the Leader of the House in respect of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, which will be debated next week. The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that new clauses 22, 23 and 24 would remove from local authorities the right to control markets within a radius of six and two thirds miles. I hope that the Leader of the House will accept the growing consensus that some change has to be made, and that any change that is approved should include the whole area of a local authority.

The right hon. Gentleman may not be aware that there will be a problem if the local authority area has a radius of more than six and two thirds miles. It could be argued that that will increase regulation rather than deregulation. Will he turn his mind to the question and tell those hon. Members, including myself, who wish to table amendments on local authority areas how to overcome that apparently insurmountable obstacle?

Mr. Newton: I am aware of some of the points that have been made about the new clauses, and of the difficulties that have arisen. I would be unwise to seek to advise the hon. Gentleman immediately from the Dispatch Box, but I shall reflect on the argument that he has advanced.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): Will my right hon. Friend find time next week for a debate on the recently released crime figures for last year, in which I and other hon. Members could draw attention to the outstanding performance of Cleveland constabulary, where recorded crime fell last year by 7 per cent., seven times the national average? We could also draw attention to the fact that it has achieved that excellent performance despite being underfunded to the tune of £1.8 million by Labour-controlled Cleveland county council.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend makes some good and interesting points. I am glad that he has had the opportunity to put them on the record without my being able to provide a full debate.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I congratulate the Government on their speedy response to requests made in the Chamber for emergency aid to save the giant tortoises in the Galapagos islands. The money that the Government made available was put to good and efficient use. May I push the Leader of the House a bit further today? Could we have a debate in Government time on the threat to endangered species such as tigers and black rhinos, the population of which is reaching such a level that they may be driven into extinction?

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise a debate on the second issue raised by the hon. Gentleman. It strikes me that such remarks could be in order, subject to your view, Madam Speaker, in the Opposition debate on Europe and the environment on Wednesday 11 May. I thank him for the generous way in which he acknowledged the action that has been taken.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that I feel an irresistible urge to congratulate him on holding a debate on the European Union on Monday week, which is very timely? Will he confirm that this Parliament, contrary to what my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) implied, may be the first of all the national Parliaments of the 12 member states in the European Community to discuss the matter before the intergovernmental conference in 1996?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend advances a good argument. I am glad that he did not resist the temptation to be nice to me, and I hope that his example will be followed by other hon. Members.

The Arts

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Michael Brown.]*

3.52 pm

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Peter Brooke): It is some time since the House has had the opportunity to debate the arts, and I welcome the opportunity to open the debate.

The hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam) was courteous enough to warn me that she would be unable to attend the debate because she is in Washington. I am sorry that she is not here, as I was impatient to hear more of the Kulturmeisterplan which I understand she has been cooking up, but of which only tantalising appetisers have thus far been served. At the risk of offending the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), I should say that in France the shadow Cabinet is called the Cabinet fant0me. A new phantom of the opera is even now in gestation.

Every cloud, however, has a silver lining, and today it takes the form of the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher), who can take comfort from Winston Churchill's judgment on the Margrave of Baden, the ally of the 1st Duke of Marlborough and the Prince Eugen:

"His military epitaph for all time must be that the two greatest captains of his age, pre-eminent and renowned in all the annals of war, rated, by actions more expressive than words, his absence from a decisive battlefield well worth fifteen thousand men."

I understand that, while the hon. Member for Redcar may have been responsible for giving birth to the putative Ministry of Culture, the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central is claiming paternity. Doubtless the more acute among my hon. Friends will be able to spot with a subtle eye which of the genetic traits of their new offspring he apportions to Redcar and which he claims for himself. I wonder whether we will spot a little blush as the arm's length is atrophied.

Many hon. Members are deeply knowledgeable in the arts, and almost all will have their own artistic interests. This afternoon, I want to give the House some indication of how we perceive the state of the arts in Britain today, to demonstrate the Government's wholehearted commitment to the arts, and to touch on the exciting possibilities ahead.

No one can doubt the vital part that the arts play in all our lives.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): Oh, yes we can.

Mr. Brooke: I was gratified to learn that my hon. Friend would be in the Chamber for the debate.

They have the ability to educate, stimulate, calm, excite, amuse, and, in the case of my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks), annoy—sometimes at the same time. More and more people are using their leisure time to participate in the arts, either as viewers or as practitioners. Since 1986, there has been a 19 per cent. increase in the number of people attending opera, and a 5 per cent. increase in those attending the ballet.

Despite all the other pressures on the spending power of the individual, the numbers of people attending plays, classical music concerts and art galleries have held up well in the recession. Thirty-six per cent. of adults in Great Britain attend events in one or more of the major art forms, and half of those go more than once a year.

Britain is, of course, greatly privileged to have an enormous wealth of talent, and a magnificent tradition in the arts. Our literary heritage is unrivalled. Our performers in music, drama and dance are feted throughout the world. Our artists are represented in major collections everywhere. The quality and diversity of our artistic provision are exceptional. I could fill the time available to me this afternoon easily by simply reciting from the press what is on offer this week in any of our major cities.

London is especially privileged in being the home of several of our national companies. Tonight, for example, hon. Members could choose between a new production of "Cosi Fan Tutte" at the Coliseum, "Carmen" at the Royal Opera house, Cocteau at the national theatre or Berio on the south bank; they could spend "A Month in the Country" at the Albery or take in "An Absolute Turkey" at the Globe—soon, I am pleased to say, to be renamed the Gielgud.

This is only to scratch the surface of the performing arts provision in London. While time permits, hon. Members could see world-class exhibitions of the work of Dali, Goya, Picasso, and any number of smaller shows of contemporary artists from this country and all over the world. If one's taste is for the applied arts, the new glass gallery at the Victoria and Albert museum or the vibrant "Colour into Cloth" exhibition at the Crafts Council provide an impressive depth of coverage.

Outside London, the scene is no less rich and varied. The past 10 years have seen a remarkable trend in major capital developments in the arts: we have seen new theatres such as the West Yorkshire playhouse, and concert halls such as St David's hall in Cardiff, the symphony hall in Birmingham, and Glasgow royal concert hall. There is now a Tate of the North and a Tate St. Ives. The refurbishment of the gas hall in Birmingham has provided us with the imaginative juxtaposition of sublime paintings by Canaletto and the far from ridiculous decoration of motor cycles. I am confident that the prospect of funds from the national lottery, a subject to which I shall return, will inspire many more equally imaginative projects.

Our major cities have always played a significant part in the cultural life of the country, and it is gratifying that the newer centres of population that have grown up more recently have also recognised the need to provide for the cultural life of their citizens. The most recent example—I am pleased to be able to mention it today—is the Anvil arts centre at Basingstoke, which opened last week with, among other things, the world premiere of a new work by John Tavener.

Many developing centres have chosen to promote themselves and their people in the traditional way by holding a festival. It is astonishing that this year there will be more than 500 official arts festivals in Britain—half of which have been going only since 1980—and that they will be enjoyed by around 4 million people.

My Department is committed to encouraging the widest possible access to all its fields of responsibilities. In the arts, one of the greatest contributions to that goal is the work done by the Arts Council and the regional arts boards to promote touring. It is a tremendous privilege to be able to see our great companies performing around the country, and those performances have introduced many people to the delights of drama, opera or dance. Exhibitions of contemporary fine and applied art also reach a much wider public through the efforts of the arts and crafts councils.

The growth of community arts, whether in cities or rural communities, is one of the most encouraging recent developments in the arts. At a recent conference organised by my Department in the west midlands, I heard of projects to stage contemporary works in properties run by English Heritage. Not only does that give an excellent example of co-operation between bodies operating in different areas of interest to my Department: it also shows how local people can be made more aware of their own heritage through art and performance.

It also demonstrates the way in which education can be provided through art. The links between education and art are long-established and strong, but they are not rigid. Each generation can discover for itself the power of art and the fascination of creativity.

The development of education units in our great companies has been a great success story in recent years. Symphony orchestras, opera houses and theatres all run education programmes designed to introduce young people to music and drama. Young people can be suspicious of art forms whose relevance to their lives they cannot immediately see, but the benefits that they and the musicians and actors who participate in the schemes gain are tremendous.

In music, the national curriculum now provides that pupils should perform and listen to music of the European "classical" tradition from its earliest roots to the present day. Popular and rock music, indigenous music of the countries of these islands, and music from a variety of western and non-western cultures can all expect to receive attention in schools. A wide-ranging course of study has been laid down, which will encourage the appreciation and enjoyment of music in all forms and lay the foundations for future generations to gain even more pleasure from listening and playing.

In the community-based arts, we have also seen an enormous increase in the provision of events that reflect the exciting diversity of our culture today. The variety and richness of what is on offer throughout the country, from African, Bangladeshi, Chinese and many other cultures, is staggering, and I am pleased to see that the representation of ethnic arts in mainstream houses is increasing all the time, to the great benefit of us all.

I should here pay tribute to the regional arts boards for their success in developing the arts in local communities. The health of the arts depends on bringing some often disparate parties together to form productive and lasting partnerships. The regional arts boards combine local knowledge with a regional perspective and have developed an unrivalled expertise in creating those partnerships.

What has that flowering of artistic and creative activity to do with the Government? The people of this country show a clear and enthusiastic interest in the arts, and it is the Government's job, through my Department, to cater for that interest by helping to create the culture of today, to add to the heritage for future generations and to broaden opportunities for people to enjoy the benefits of their heritage and culture. That is the case for all my responsibilities.

For the arts, the Government make their main contribution by funding the Arts Council. I shall say more in a moment about how they do so, and the relationship between the council and Government.

T. S. Eliot said:

"April is the cruellest month".

He may have had cricket in mind. For the arts world, this April has been less cruel than momentous. From the first of the month, the Arts Council of Great Britain ceased to operate, and was succeeded by the Arts Councils of England, Scotland and Wales. Each of those bodies is now autonomous, and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales now have responsibility for the arts in their countries.

A new council meant a new royal charter and a new chairman. The noble Lord Palumbo has given distinguished service to the council and to the entire arts world as chairman since 1989. The noble Lord Gowrie, as the first chairman of the new body, has already started to make his mark. His ringing cheers for Harrison Birtwhistle's "Gawain" show his willingness to share his wholehearted enthusiasm for the arts.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I have been listening to the right hon. Gentleman's very interesting speech. Does he not think that, as Lord Gowrie was a former Conservative Arts Minister, his employment as the new chairman of the Arts Council does away with the arm's-length principle? How can we feel confident that a Tory ex-Minister will take on a Conservative Government on behalf of the arts in the way that we would expect the chairman of the Arts Council to do?

Mr. Brooke: All I can tell the hon. Gentleman is that Lord Gowrie has been considerably ruder about the Government since he took office than his predecessor was. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman should raise that sceptical note, because the appointment of Lord Gowrie as chairman has been widely welcomed, not only throughout the arts constituency but within the Arts Council itself.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): On the appointment of Lord Gowrie and the fact that April is a cruel month, a moment ago I opened a letter from Lord Gowrie, which I had just had passed to me, in which he writes:

"We may be able to cope just with static funding in real terms; a cut sends many of the arts organisations the Council funds to the emergency ward. Over the next four years, we have been told to expect a 13 per cent. real terms reduction in the grants to the arts."

The House need have no worry that Lord Gowrie will be a creature of the Secretary of State.

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful for quotations from Lord Gowrie, who has made reasonably clear the strenuousness with which he will fight on that issue. I remark, absolutely in passing, that the last time there was a real-terms cut in the arts funding budget when the Opposition were in power was an occasion when the Labour Government of the day were supported by the Lib-Lab pact.

April also saw the appointment of a new secretary general for the council. The incumbent of that post, together with the chairman, is, for the majority of people, the public face of the council. It is a demanding job, and one which I am sure appears thankless from time to time. Ministers understand that position only too well. But the health of the Arts Council is intimately connected with the health of the arts, and hon Members will wish to join me in wishing Mary Allen and Lord Gowrie godspeed as their new ship puts out into what have of late been stormy waters.

April saw other changes, notably the delegation, which I announced 16 months ago, of a further 42 arts organisations to the regional arts boards. That reflects the Government's belief that decisions are often best taken

[Mr. Brooke]

close to those who will be affected by them. The transfer of responsibilities for the Scottish and Welsh Arts Councils is further evidence of that belief.

I hope that I have demonstrated by what I have said so far that the arts in this country are flourishing, and that they are served by a dynamic funding system. Let me now say a little more about that funding system, the players in it and the Government's role.

Since the Wilding report in 1989, the arts funding system has gone through a significant period of change, and is now in the process of ensuring that it is in good shape to meet the undoubted challenges to come. In particular, the Arts Council itself has undergone a series of reviews, the end of which was signalled by my statement to the House in November. The outcome of those reviews is that there is common ground between the council, Ministers and the wider world on a number of points.

I would like to talk about the arm's-length principle. This is the principle which has governed the relationship between Ministers and the council since it was founded, and which keeps the funding of individual arts organisations out of the political arena. It follows, therefore, that it is not for the Government to seek to intervene in matters of artistic judgment, although there can be occasions when it is right for Ministers to convey to the Arts Council public and political opinion which has been expressed to them.

"Arm's length" is a slogan that trips easily off the tongue, but a concept which many people, I fear, seem to have difficulty in accepting. I can assure the House that we understand it on the Government Benches, and adhere to it. I think that most people would agree that the principle has served the country well for very nearly 50 years.

It is therefore with some surprise that I read recent statements attributed to the hon. Member for Redcar which suggest that the Labour party may not have the same level of commitment to the arm's-length principle; indeed, that it would effectively end it.

The hon. Member for Redcar brushes off this momentous change with the words:

"The Government is elected to make policy."

Up to a point, Lord Copper. I think it would be a tragic day for the arts in Britain were a Government to develop, as the Labour party seems to threaten, a policy for each art form. No wonder there has been such exponential growth in the number of departmental shadows. It took four Jack Lang wannabes to think up that nonsensical Ministry of Culture, a recipe for bureaucratic strangulation and political interference.

The productivity of Conservative Members is rather more impressive. I can safely say that either I or my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Mr. Sproat) could have jettisoned such lunacy all on our own. To be fair, the shadow spokesmen are arrogating to themselves other responsibilities, such as measuring the dimensions of council house passageways. What the single genius of Sir Parker Morris accomplished before will no doubt be less productively achieved by the less formidable partnership of Fisher-Corbett. We also admire their sartorial self-confidence of seeking to take responsibility for fashion design as well.

Thank goodness the shadows will remain insubstantial. I have perhaps thought of a better purpose for them. When Marsham street, a building of suitably eastern European design, is finally emptied, the shadow National Heritage spokesmen—who by then will presumably number dozens—can be let loose inside to caretake. They will pass their days out of harm's way, dreaming of a Ministry of Culture, measuring corridors and calibrating views.

To return to reality, as I have said, we all want the widest possible access to the arts.

Mr. Tim Renton (Mid-Sussex): I have been following what my right hon. Friend has said with great interest. If I have any fortune in catching your eye, Madam Speaker, I might refer to it later. I am a little surprised by my right hon. Friend's references to the French Ministry of Culture under Jack Lang. I was fortunate enough, when I was Minister for the Arts, to meet Jack Lang several times, and I have to say that, as his Ministry is strictly hands-on—it gets its budget directly from the French Trésor, and no one is allowed to interfere with that—Jack Lang certainly was an interventionist, but he was a successful interventionist in many ways, and he was extremely successful in getting the grands oeuvres of President Mitterrand built quickly. The Richelieu wing of the Louvre and the new music conservatory at La Villette, to mention only two, are the result of very direct interventionism by a French Minister of Culture.

Mr. Tony Banks: Hell hath no fury like an Arts Minister scorned.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend will forgive me if I say that he seemed to deliver most of his speech in the course of that intervention.

Mr. Banks: It is getting vicious.

Mr. Brooke: In response to my right hon. Friend, of course I acknowledge the particular French genius and am happy to listen on the occasions when we are told that those matters are ordered better in France.

The fact remains that, as it comes out of a different culture, it comes out of a different national temperament, and the manner in which those matters are managed reflects the temperament and history of the respective countries. I am also gratified—it is testimony to the partnership that exists between us, fostered by my right hon. Friend in his day—at the degree of inquiry from Paris about the manner in which we order certain things ourselves, not least in the museums world.

As I have said, we all want the widest possible access to the arts. That objective is shared by Government, the arts councils, the regional arts boards and arts organisations everywhere, but to be achieved it needs hard work.

My Department launched its access initiative last year in consultation with our sponsored bodies. At one level, the initiative will establish what each of our sponsored bodies means by widening access, how successful policies are at present, what might more realistically be achieved, and whether that suggests the adoption of new policies and priorities. At the operational level, the initiative aims to provide information, encourage networking between organisations and take up common causes. The Department will especially work to collect and disseminate statistical information and examples of good practice.

Another priority of mine, which is accepted by the Arts Council, is that the council must be ready to explain the basis for its decisions more clearly. The council has put forward many ideas for doing so. I was especially impressed by the willingness shown by representatives of

the council to expose themselves to a potentially hostile audience at the seminar organised by the National Campaign for the Arts. Opportunities such as that seminar and an openness on all sides can only lead to greater understanding.

I also feel that we need still further to streamline the system. Last November, I set the Arts Council a target of gross savings in its administration costs of 8 per cent. in a full year; money which can feed through into support for the arts. Those savings are being implemented, and the administrative costs of the council and the remainder of the system will continue to be closely watched.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): The Secretary of State is encouraging people to do good housekeeping. How does he explain the administrative costs of his own Department, which have gone up by 150 per cent. since the right hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) was Minister? It now costs £25 million in bureaucracy to administer Government policy.

Mr. Brooke: I am diffident about making this rejoinder to the hon. Gentleman, but the responsibilities of the Department of National Heritage exceed by a factor of 150 per cent. the responsibilities which we inherited from my right hon. Friend.

The scene is now set for a strong and effective Arts Council, working in a clear and well structured relationship with Government for the good of the arts in Britain. The continued vitality of our artistic life depends on fostering a range of sources of support: the audience; central and local government; the private sector; and individual patrons.

The Government are committed to supporting the arts in three broad ways: by continuing to invest in the arts, mainly through providing grant in aid to the Arts Council; by encouraging a greater sense of independence and self-reliance within the arts community itself; and by encouraging the ever closer involvement of the business community and individual patrons.

In terms of direct investment, the Government's commitment has been amply demonstrated over the years, with significant increases in real terms in the Arts Council's grant in aid. Between 1979 and 1993, the real-terms increase was some 45 per cent. Against that background, I cannot accept that this year's provision should have been greeted with such criticism. Government funding remains substantial, but subsidy for the arts is a call on the public purse and must be considered alongside all other such calls.

The economic climate is, and has been, very difficult, which has inevitably meant that some organisations have needed to cut their coats according to a smaller piece of cloth. Over a year ago, in the 1992 public spending round, against the background of those economic difficulties, the Government signalled a reduction in Arts Council funding for 1994-95. That is the basis on which the Arts Council had to plan throughout last year. Nevertheless, last November, despite the continuing need to keep a tight rein on public expenditure, I managed to find more money than was planned for the arts.

Against earlier plans, the Arts Council is to receive an extra £800,000 this year, resulting in grant in aid of £186 million, and an extra £1.6 million in 1995-96, which will be maintained in 1996-97. In allocating those funds for 1994-95, the Council has managed, in the vast majority of cases, to protect funding for revenue clients. There will be some reduction in the amount of developmental work, but regional theatres and national companies, among others, will receive the same amounts as this year.

Since last November, extraordinary credence has been given to the suggestion that the Albert memorial is to benefit at the expense of the arts. Before hon. Members try to make something of that peculiar idea, let me put the record straight.

Queen Victoria's consort may not now be much in favour, and the style of his memorial may not be to everyone's taste, but it is a landmark in London, forming the northern focus of that celebration of arts and sciences now known as "Albertopolis". It needs restoration. I remark in passing that it is in my constituency, and I am proud of it.

The announcement last November that work on the memorial could start in 1994-95—an announcement which I should have thought would be welcomed by such as the *Evening Standard*, which had been campaigning for the restoration—gave birth to the odd belief that I had punished the arts in order to restore Albert. The Prince Consort, an accomplished musician and composer and the visionary force behind the Great Exhibition of 1851, would certainly not have put preservation before innovation.

English Heritage published its "Forward Strategy" in autumn 1992, and the organisational changes resulting from its implementation have enabled substantial sums to be deployed away from administrative costs. One of the benefits of those changes is that English Heritage has been able to make up to £1 million available in 1994-95 to allow the restoration of the memorial to start.

Some commentators have also suggested that the new British library is being built at the expense of the arts. It is extraordinary to suggest, as at least one has done, that nobody wants the new building. We have in this country one of the greatest libraries in the world: a vast store of human knowledge which encompasses all other aspects of our heritage. As a Sunday newspaper used proudly to boast, all human life is there. Such a treasure deserves to be housed appropriately.

But, having said that, the development is still proceeding within the total funding allowed. For 1994-95, I was able to bring forward some agreed expenditure, but again this was not new money.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Does my right hon. Friend accept that many people think that it is a scandal that the Albert memorial has been left sheathed as it has been for so long? Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that the land adjacent to the British library will not be sold so that the library never has a chance to expand?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's remark about the Albert memorial. It is for the British library to state what purpose it might intend for the land which is surplus to its requirements.

Local authorities are also key patrons of the arts—providing direct funding for arts organisations and for individuals, supporting arts buildings and incorporating public art into regeneration schemes. A substantial survey recently undertaken by the Arts Council has shown that local authorities are broadly maintaining their level of support for the arts, which is roughly equivalent to that provided by central Government.

[Mr. Brooke]

I pay tribute to the enormous amount of valuable support that local authorities give to the arts. They are major funders of some of the most famous of our regional theatres, providing large-scale arts and entertainment programmes for very large audiences. Just as important is the smaller scale, where a local service is necessary to support local arts; that often means the amateur sector, a large and important sector which we all know well within our constituencies.

The list of local authorities that make imaginative and substantial contributions is a long one, and I mean no disservice to any other on that list if I mention only Nottingham, Cambridge, Derby, Southampton and—dare I say it, at the risk of influencing today's poll—the cities of London and Westminster.

When I have attended my Department's regional conferences over the past few months, I have been made aware of concerns that those involved in the arts and recreation have about the proposed changes in the structure of local government. It is important to ensure that there are effective arrangements in place for the delivery of recreational and cultural services, and I hope that reorganisation will be seen as an opportunity to create new structures within local government to improve provision in those sectors.

The past 20 years or so have seen a quite remarkable increase in business sponsorship of the arts. In 1976, business sponsorship stood at a modest half a million pounds. By 1992-93, business support amounted to some £58 million. Much credit for that steady and significant growth goes to the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts, which has developed a pivotal position in business investment in the arts.

The Government's own initiative—the business sponsorship incentive scheme—has also played its part. Established in 1984, the scheme has so far attracted nearly £70 million in new money for the arts, £46.5 million from business sponsors and £22.7 million from Government awards.

The underlying trend remains very healthy. In recognition of the success of the business sponsorship incentive scheme, the Government are giving an additional £300,000 for the scheme in each of the next three years. This year so far, we have seen the announcement of the splendid new partnership between Allied Lyons and the Royal Shakespeare company of £3.3 million over the next three years, and British Telecom's new three-year commitment, worth more than half a million pounds, to British orchestras. Only last week, I attended the launch of KPMG's interesting new "Go Opera" scheme.

For the future—and it is getting close now—there is the exciting prospect of the national lottery. By early next year, that should be providing significant sums on a continuing basis for the arts, sport, heritage, charities and millennium projects. Money for new buildings, for badly needed refurbishment of existing ones and for new equipment, could all come from lottery proceeds. The Arts Council will be distributing those funds for the arts, including film and crafts.

Subject to the directions that I will be issuing, it will be able to decide on priorities in its own area against which to assess applications. The lottery will be able to fund projects that are important to the nation's quality of life, but do not have first call on public expenditure. That extra money will make a huge impact in improving provision of and access to the arts in this country.

I hope that the House will join me in celebrating the arts in this country. The arts serve as a measure of the level of our civilisation, and I believe that we are fortunate to be living in a period when such vitality and diversity add immeasurably to the life of the nation.

Mr. Dicks: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. It is a tradition of the House that an Opposition Member follows a speaker from the Government Front Bench. That is normal, because those opposite usually oppose what has been said. In this instance, there is no real opposition in principle from the other side—there is just argument about detail. As I am the only legitimate opposition speaker present, I wonder whether I should be called next.

Madam Speaker: That is a very good try by the hon. Gentleman. I shall certainly look his way in due course.

4.24 pm

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): If the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) is patient, he will hear plenty of opposition to a thoroughly inadequate presentation by the Secretary of State over the past half hour. As the Secretary of State pointed out, there has been no debate about the arts since July 1990—almost four years ago.

The Government have shown a remarkable lack of enthusiasm to account for their policies on the arts. In that time, there has been a new Department of state and two Secretaries of State. The present Secretary of State has been in his post for 20 months and this is the first time that he has come to the House to account for his policies. His lack of enthusiasm—the hon. Gentleman will understand that—is hardly surprising, given the Government's poor record in the arts.

The Government's record is terrible; they have been wasteful, incompetent and feeble. If the best that they can do is the sort of speech that the Secretary of State just made, that illustrates my point. His speech was benign and patrician; it failed to address any of the problems that his Government have created in the cultural life of this country. The Secretary of State ought to be ashamed of himself.

He painted a very upbeat picture. He took us on a Brooke's tour of the arts. He simply quoted what was on offer, mainly in London but around the country to some extent. He is correct: there are some remarkable companies and artists and amazing museums. But, on the whole, they are existing and innovating in spite of, rather than because of, the Government's policies which have been so deficient in many respects.

The Government have put all of the companies that the Minister mentioned today in impossible positions—almost all have had to cut their programmes, cut their staff numbers and cut back on commissioning new work. The Secretary of State had a remarkable nerve to take credit for their activities in that smug and complacent way. They are surviving through their ingenuity and determination in spite of, rather than because of, the Government.

The Secretary of State also took credit for what local authorities are doing. He mentioned some cities. It is they, rather than his Government, which have supported the arts

for the past 15 years, but they have done so in the teeth of the Government's incredible dogmatic hostility to any expenditure by local authorities.

What local authorities all over the country—of both political persuasions, but mainly those under Labour control—have invested in the cultural life of their cities is remarkable. Every time that they have increased expenditure, they have done so without the support of central Government. Indeed, they have increased expenditure with central Government sneering and carping and saying that any investment by local authorities is, per se, bad.

There is dogmatic and idiotic hostility to local government expenditure, whatever it is. Whether it is competent, imaginative, profitable or whether it helps the long-term cultural or economic life of a city, the Government are opposed to it. They have put every obstacle in the way of local authorities through targeting, rate capping, poll tax, council tax and all of the other penalties which have been imposed on local authorities.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham) *rose—*

Mr. Fisher: I will not give way; I will finish the point that I am making to the Secretary of State. For him to take any credit for what local authorities have done in the teeth of 15 years sustained hostility from central Government is breathtaking. He should have the grace to acknowledge that. He has not supported local authorities; he has attacked them for 15 years.

Mr. Jessel: Did not the hon. Gentleman hear any of what was said? Before he went into his string of adjectives, did not he hear that there has been a 45 per cent. increase in real terms in the Arts Council budget since 1979? Did not he hear about the hundred fold increase in business sponsorship? Did not he hear what is to come in the national lottery?

Mr. Fisher: The hon. Gentleman always contributes to our debates and almost always gets his facts wrong. There has not been a 45 per cent. increase in Arts Council expenditure since 1979. Those figures have been conclusively rubbished and discredited. Arts sponsorship has gone up and I welcome that, but it increased from nothing to something and has fallen back over the past year. The hon. Gentleman ought to do his homework before he intervenes in our debates.

Let me return to the record of the Secretary of State and the Government. The idea that he should take any credit for what has happened in cities and country is breathtaking. The Government's hostility to what has been happening has caused much frustration and anger around the country. The Government cannot understand the cultural importance of what has happened. It is extraordinary for a Conservative Government, who pride themselves on having some understanding of the economy and what happens in business, not to understand that, despite them, those cities have built hugely profitable cultural industries employing more than 500,000 people, earning huge amounts of exports and attracting tourists to Britain. They are a key part of our economy.

For the sake of underfunding the seedcorn—the small sums of money to the Arts Council—and trying to constrain local authorities in their seedcorn investment, the Government are diminishing the impact of our important cultural industries—publishing, the record industry, broadcasting, film and the design industries.

The Secretary of State sneered at the importance of design. He does not seem to understand that design is something that Britain does best and that the Government spend £73 billion of taxpayers' money on goods and services that need the input of a designer. Those are the Government's own figures given in answer to a parliamentary question. He sneered at designers. He does not understand the importance of design as an industry as well as to the quality of our cultural life. That lack of perspective running through his speech is the reason why his policies have been not only ineffective but wrong.

The Government have done one good thing in the past two years—they set up this Department of State. Throughout the 1980s, the Labour party, supported by the Liberal Democrats, argued that there should be a coherent Ministry covering the arts, the media and the cultural industries. Throughout those years, Tory Members and former Ministers sneered at the idea and ridiculed it in the same words as the Secretary of State ridiculed the idea of a Ministry of Culture and said that it would never work. I am delighted that the Government saw sense at the last election, nicked our policy and adopted it. I congratulate them on that, but it is the only good thing in the past two years.

Mr. Brooke: My strong recollection is that Norman Buchan declined holding office in the shadow Administration because the Labour party would not include broadcasting in the Department to which the hon. Gentleman is referring.

Mr. Fisher: If the Minister had taken the trouble to read our long cultural policy at the last general election, headed

"Arts and Media—our cultural future",

he would have seen that we were proposing precisely the Ministry that he was. We proposed it in debate after debate in the House. It included responsibility for broadcasting. It did not include sport and tourism. That was the only change that the Government made—an interesting change and not one that we oppose. Otherwise, it was what we were proposing—a coherent cultural Ministry. The Government had the sense to set it up and I congratulate them. It was long overdue and I am glad they did it. However, it has not had a policy. Because it was a piece of opportunism—it grew out of years of opposition to the idea—there was no policy to hold it together.

Many people around the country would agree with me that, while the Government have brought together all these functions within one Department of State, they are all operating separately. The broadcasting side is operating separately from the arts and libraries side and the other sectors have not been brought together by a coherent policy. The Secretary of State has to address that important policy vacuum. In his heart of hearts he probably understands and knows that, but it is difficult for him to develop a cultural policy that unites those functions, which he has rightly brought together in one Department of State.

Behind all this, as the right hon. Gentleman acknowledged today, is the key area of funding. It is by no means the only criterion by which the Government should be judged. There are other important ones, such as their attitudes to education, training and access, and to changing our monocultural domination—the traditions of the sole

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use of the English language in a multicultural society, and so on. Nevertheless, funding is one of the key criteria by which the Department will continue to be judged.

In spite of the right hon. Gentleman's attempts to wriggle out of it, the record is a poor one. The Arts Council grant has been cut for the first time in years—a cut of £3.3 million, which the Arts Council tells us will translate, in real terms, into more than £7 million worth of cuts in grant. That represents a broken promise. The Government did not make many promises about the cultural life of the country in their manifesto, but they did make the simple statement that they would maintain support for the arts. That they have not done. This is just another broken promise, rather like their broken promises on taxation and many other matters—

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): Get on with it.

Mr. Fisher: I will not get on with it. The people need to be reminded of that, and they are only too ready to listen to the catalogue of promises that the Government have broken. There could not have been a clearer commitment than the Government's pledge to maintain support for the arts, but this year they have not done so. Support for the arts will be less this year.

Interestingly enough, the right hon. Gentleman's colleagues in Scotland and Wales did recognise that commitment. The relevant Secretaries of State have topped up Arts Council grants for Scotland and Wales, but this Secretary of State has not done so for England. Why is England, uniquely, to be disadvantaged? Is it that the Secretary of State lacks the will? Did he not care enough, was he not prepared to fight for his budget as hard as his colleagues fought for theirs?

Mr. Brooke: Will the hon. Gentleman recognise that decisions about Arts Council funding have always been affected by the general economic climate? If he is about to attack the Government for their funding decisions, will he explain—allowing for the length of time that his party was in office—why the Labour party cut the Arts Council budget disproportionately more often than we have, taking into account the fact that it has been cut in real terms on 11 occasions?

Mr. Fisher: We are debating the policies of the Government over the past 15 years. If, on a different occasion, the Minister wants to debate political history —I regret to say that Labour Governments are a matter of political history—we shall be happy to engage him in such a debate. Today, the Government must be held accountable for their own policies, and the right hon. Gentleman knows that they have cut the grant.

Mr. Richard Spring (Bury St. Edmunds): The hon. Gentleman has given us a long shock-horror catalogue of the state of the arts which no one who takes an interest in those matters would begin to recognise. What spending pledge would he like to give, to make good the shortfall which he alleges exists? Shall we hear anything about that from the Labour party this afternoon?

Mr. Fisher: No, we are debating Government policies this afternoon. The hon. Gentleman has obviously been asleep. I have not yet delivered any catalogue of shock-horror disasters. I intend to come to some of the problems that the Minister has created, but I have not yet identified any company, or the size of its deficit, although many of them certainly face problems—orchestras, theatres and opera companies. Had the hon. Gentleman remained awake he would have realised that.

The Secretary of State cannot get away with saying that he has to cut in relation to the economic climate. He should be fighting for his new Department's funding; moreover, as he said only too clearly, he has been able to find money for other important works. I do not dispute the fact that the British library needs finishing. The Minister, I noted, was not too keen to discuss it, apart from in funding terms, as the library is probably the greatest single public expenditure disaster of the past 15 years, given the overrun on expenditure, the lack of scrutiny of its budget, the changes to its contracting and legal status. The Government have an appalling record here. However, I entirely agree that we need the British library. I was glad to hear the right hon. Gentleman's point about the land behind it. That is very important to the library's development, but it is a matter to which the Government have not yet given the necessary attention.

The Secretary of State can find money for the projects that he wants, such as the British library and the Albert memorial. I agree that it is nonsensical that the Albert memorial should have been under that great pall of scaffolding for so many years. When the right hon. Gentleman could find money for this purpose, why did he cut by £3.3 million the amount available to the Arts Council? He could have protected the budget. As we are debating the arts today, I have to make the point that the right hon. Gentleman did not protect his budget in the way that the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales protected theirs.

Mr. Brooke: I am sorry to go back over ground that was covered in my speech, but I have to say that I made it perfectly clear that the Government have not found any money for the Albert memorial next year and that the amount available to the Arts Council was not cut because we were providing such funds. I said that English Heritage, out of its savings, had been able to make a contribution.

Mr. Fisher: English Heritage comes under the right hon. Gentleman's Department. However, I accept the detailed point that he did find money for the royal palaces and for the British library. He knows perfectly well that the cuts were not made in all parts of his departmental budget. The Arts Council was singled out for treatment. It is baffling why it should be so. I hope that the noble Lord Gowrie will explain to the Secretary of State—he probably has done so already—the impact of such a small amount of money. Indeed, the sum is insignificant in the context of the Department's expenditure, including an outlay of £25 million on administration. The Secretary of State has not made any attempt to cut that figure, yet he has taken £3 million from the Arts Council. That cut has had a disproportionately malign effect on companies all over the country. The right hon. Gentleman must understand the simple point that, for very small savings in his departmental budget—petty change even in the context of that budget—he has done enormous harm to the Arts Council at a very difficult time.

The Government are setting a very difficult—almost impossible—task for the new chairman, Lord Gowrie, and the new secretary general, Mary Allen. The Opposition

congratulate those two people and wish them well. We want the Arts Council to succeed. Lord Gowrie and Ms Allen know that their problem is that, because of the Government's stupid minimal and mean-minded cuts, they are inheriting a demoralised arts administration world at a time when the Arts Council already suffers from the lack of the credibility that has been enjoyed in the past and does not have a reputation for competence. I do not believe that that is the fault of the previous chairman, who, in many ways, did an extremely good job and was a brave advocate for the arts. In administration—particularly in relation to the so-called initiative concerning the London orchestras and the attempt last year to cut six regional theatres—the Arts Council has been left a difficult legacy, which has been made far worse by the Secretary of State.

The Arts Council must do various things very quickly. It must speak up for the arts world and explain some basic truths to the Secretary of State. Like the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), I was much encouraged by Lord Gowrie's letter to Members of Parliament on both sides of the House. That letter, received today, says:

"Arts activity cannot be sustained against this background of cuts."

I am glad that the new chairman will be critical when criticism is necessary. That is a good start. The Government must listen. The Secretary of State appointed the chairman and he must take account of his advice, but the right hon. Gentleman must also find an approach to restore the Arts Council's credibility. We all want it to succeed. We need such a national body.

I shall not engage in the rather silly debate about the arm's-length principle. The Secretary of State, who started the debate, knows that the Opposition are committed to that principle in that it applies to non-interference in the artistic decisions and the independence of companies. We have always been, and remain, committed to those things, as the Secretary of State knows. Equally, the right hon. Gentleman knows that the argument is much more complicated. There is no arm's-length principle in respect of museums, galleries and many other parts of the right hon. Gentleman's brief. Those are funded directly by the Department, in precisely the way that the Arts Council protects the Secretary of State from funding the national theatre. The Tate gallery is funded directly; the national theatre is not.

The Secretary of State knows that in many sectors—particularly with local authorities, which he rightly praised—there is no arm's-length principle. We have no tradition, at either central or local government level, of interference in the artistic judgment and decisions of companies. That is a position with which hon. Members on both sides of the House and people throughout the country agree, and it will remain. It is a strength of the cultural life of the country.

Mr. Brooke: I apologise for intervening again, and I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way once more. By virtue of the number of hon. Members present, we have an opportunity to make this a proper debate.

Does the hon. Gentleman, like many people on the continent, acknowledge that one of the glories of our system is the trustee principle in the case of the national museums? The funding of museums on the continent is subject to a great deal more interference and intervention. In our case, the trustees are remarkably robust in making it clear that the running of museums is a matter for them.

Mr. Fisher: I certainly share that view, but I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman bases the arm's-length principle on the existence of trustees. The national theatre has a board of trustees, but many people would say—correctly, in my view—that if the Arts Council were abolished and the national theatre were funded directly by the Department, there would be a risk of destroying the arm's-length principle, despite the existence of the board of trustees. The essence of the arm's-length principle is not the relationship but the lack of interference in artistic decisions. The Secretary of State knows that, and his argument was a false and rather blustering one.

In an interesting intervention, the right hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) praised the French system. I share the praise for what was done by Jack Lang to raise the importance and the profile of cultural life in France, but I disagree entirely with the way in which the French system runs everything from the ministry. Grants are administered directly by civil servants. That is wasteful, bureaucratic and centralist, but it is a long-standing French tradition to run things from the top down—from Paris down. It is not our way. In particular, it is not the way of the Labour party, which believes in devolution and in trusting local authorities, whether Labour or Conservative.

Local authorities should be allowed to get on and develop cultural life in their own areas. That is true devolution. Unfortunately, the Government do not believe in true devolution. The Greater London council started the whole movement towards local authorities believing in the arts and developing the cultural life of the city. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who, sadly, is not in the Chamber, was chairman of the relevant committee. He was harassed by the Conservative Government. Indeed, the Government so deplored the council that it was abolished.

The Secretary of State must know that, leaving aside individual decisions of the Greater London council, everything he has said about local authorities goes back to the lead that was given by that body's understanding of the importance of investing in the cultural life of London. The lack of strategic planning of the cultural life of the city is undermining its cultural strength, to which, referring to the west end theatres, the right hon. Gentleman paid tribute. As there is no coherent strategy, many cultural opportunities in London are going amiss.

I hope that Lord Gowrie will not see the Arts Council's problems purely in managerial terms. It is important that the council gets things right. Decisions must be taken more quickly and more cheaply. Now that the council's clients have been devolved, there are fewer staff, but this is not solely a managerial problem. The council must find a new role and must reassert old ones. It must find a new relationship with the regional arts boards and local authorities. There must be a genuine partnership. The council must pursue the agendas that it has been pursuing quite well in recent years, breaking down the monoculture and creating opportunities for disabled people, for women and for people whose mother tongue is not English. In particular, it could adopt a huge new role on innovation.

For 20 years, arts administration and policy, at national and local levels, concentrated on audiences and access. It was quite right that that should be so. We needed to enlarge audiences and to widen access. The education and community and outreach work that the Secretary of State has mentioned has furthered that cause. However, we need to emphasise once again the need for innovation and for

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support for the individual and creative genius of companies and of individuals. Here, the Arts Council has a role in finding new ways to encourage innovation, particularly with the funding, through the national lottery and the millennium fund, of the new generation of buildings. We welcome that new generation of buildings because the arts have lacked capital investment.

If thinking and debate about the nature of such buildings and the needs that they should serve are not led now by the Secretary of State and the Arts Council, we could end up repeating the 20th century in the 21st century rather than understanding cultural needs over the next 50 years. The Secretary of State will have noted the breakdown in the divisions between dance, drama and music. Those require different sorts of venues and we should take care before building a generation of proscenium arch theatres or more concert halls.

I join the Secretary of State in welcoming developments at Basingstoke. Many high-quality, beautiful and much-needed concert halls have been built in the past 10 years, but they are basically 19th century structures. For the performing arts and especially for theatre and dance I suspect that a different sort of space is needed. We certainly need a debate on that and on how they should be funded—via the companies that play there or the venues themselves. Those are difficult decisions but all hon. Members should have a common interest in them and the Arts Council has an opportunity to lead that innovative debate.

The Secretary of State will know that Mr. Peter Brook has come back this year with a new production. He had to leave the country because it could not provide the sort of imaginative and long-term support for the innovative work that he wanted to do or the spaces in which he wanted to do it. I suspect that his work is being repeated in different ways by the Theatre de Complicité, by Opera Factory, by the work that Ruth Mackenzie is doing at the Nottingham Playhouse and by the Tramway in Glasgow.

This is a new way of looking at the arts that breaks down the barriers between dance, drama and music. The national lottery and the millennium fund provide a chance to help that and to find new and exciting ways to sustain it. If we do not sustain it we shall simply repeat 19th century or, at best, 20th century houses. There is a big role for the Arts Council in this development, and I hope that the Secretary of State will help it to fulfil that role.

The Secretary of State has had difficulty in developing a policy and in defending his budget because he has not been long in office and has not been able to develop in his Department a strategy for our cultural life. Now that his Department is up and running, he should turn to that. He had some fun mocking the Labour party's development of ideas of a cultural policy, but he would do well to be a little more modest and to discover what that means. The distinction between that cultural policy and arts funding policy, which is what the Secretary of State is pursuing although not very well because he is cutting funding, is crucial.

A cultural policy recognises that cultural life does not just happen in the arts organisations that it funds or in those that are funded by the Arts Council, local authorities and other bodies: it happens in the commercial world and in the voluntary side of our culture, which are very important. It is only when we examine the scale of those and the number of people who earn a living from them that we recognise their importance to the economy and how they permeate medicine, hospitals, prisons, the environment, open spaces, buildings, parks and their design and public art. They make a great contribution and the Government have an enormous responsibility in all those sectors.

An arts funding policy that concentrates solely on how much or how little is given to the existing companies is wholly inadequate. A cultural policy must recognise that our cultural life is what happens in Penguin or in record shops or—the Secretary of State sneered at this—in the design of clothes or furniture. Those are as important as what happens in our theatres, and until the Government understand that basic truth they will not get arts funding right. Until they have a cultural policy they cannot have an adequate arts funding policy.

With the national lottery and the millennium fund the Minister has a real responsibility. The new European directive on architectural competition lays a responsibility on the Government to employ architects for the first time for those buildings and to hold design competitions on various scales. That will not necessarily be expensive or cumbersome. I share the praise of the right hon. Member for Mid-Sussex for what the French have done but the French Government had specific legislation on architecture that brought on a new generation of architects and made sure that Government expenditure on architecture carried weight and led with good design.

The Secretary of State may not appreciate that, between them, other Departments are spending £5,000 million of taxpayers' money on new buildings and on renovating old buildings. There is no Government policy on that, no co-ordinated approach and no fostering of design or good architects. Until we have that, the incredible amount of taxpayers' money that is already being spent before the national lottery or the millennium fund come on stream will not carry its full weight.

There are plenty of examples of good Government-funded buildings such as Waterloo station but there are also some rotten examples. The Minister ought to recognise that that is as important to our cultural life as what happens in theatres or concert halls. The Government can grasp that responsibility only by supporting a cultural rather than an arts funding policy and particularly one that incorporates the role of the Department for Education in promoting art in schools and in training. The Minister knows that there is a crisis there. I accept that he is not responsible, but this is a debate on Government policy on the arts and the Government's policy on the arts in schools is a disaster. The number of advisory posts has dropped by almost half and the Secretary of State knows that there is a crisis of morale and lack of opportunity in the school library and museum services and in music teaching.

The right hon. Member for Bexley and Old Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) did much to support music in this country. We have great orchestras because we gave young people a chance to discover their skills at playing instruments in primary school and trained them, but that no longer happens under many local authorities. In whole swathes of the country children never get a chance to discover whether they can play an instrument. That is a disgrace and the Government should put it right by remedying their policy on discretionary grants to drama and dance schools.

The Minister has had all the evidence from the Gulbenkian report, which the Government co-funded. He

should look at that and recognise that for very small sums of Government money he could put that right and make sure that a small number of accredited drama and dance schools were able to take the students that they want because they think that they will be the professional dancers and actors of the future. If the right hon. Gentleman cannot do that, he is denying opportunities and skills and undermining his policies for the future.

Those are Government policies rather than the policies of the right hon. Gentleman's Department, but they point up our assertion that the arts and our cultural life do not depend solely on his Department. All Departments make decisions every week that affect our cultural life. If a Labour Government were in power, the right hon. Gentleman's Department would not interfere in the activities of other Departments but would co-ordinate them. That is difficult because it runs counter to the whole Gladstonian structure of Departments and civil service responsibilities and empires.

The Minister knows that Departments such as the Department for Education, the Departments of Transport and of Health and Departments responsible for training make cultural decisions. They are making them in isolation, without the Secretary of State's advice and without understanding their cultural impact. That is wrong, and that is why we need a cultural policy that supports rather than attacks local authorities. They want to get on with investing in the life of their cities and should have Government support. Until the Government recognise their importance and the importance of a cultural policy, they will continue to get arts funding wrong in the way that they have got it wrong over the past year.

4.58 pm

Sir Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): I apologise to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage for missing the first few minutes of his speech. I had a hint that it was necessary for me to vote in Westminster and I felt that it was desirable and necessary to carry out that request. However, I listened with the greatest interest to the rest of my hon. Friend's speech.

It is disquieting that the Government should have chosen to have an arts debate on the one day in the year on which they were bound to find the House almost empty because hon. Members are active on the electoral scene. The only consolation is that, whereas there are four hon. Members on the Opposition Benches, there are eight on ours. To have 100 per cent. more than the Opposition is in itself some small consolation.

The arts are particularly important for the Conservative party and we must be seen publicly to be full in our support for them. In the 1920s and the 1930s, the Conservatives had all too deep a reputation for being hard-nosed monetary people, naturally containing the wealthy, who were able to enjoy their opera and music because they could afford to pay for it. The rest of the population had great difficulty in doing that. All of that changed after the second world war. We must be careful in preserving the reputation that we have since established. My hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks)—I think that he is a friend—shouted out earlier that those things are nothing whatever to do with the Government. I completely disagree with him on that. He is representing what I have described as the hard-nosed monetary side of the Conservative party. The Government have a very great responsibility for the arts. My anxiety is that they should maintain that responsibility.

I must confess that I did not find the speech of the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher), particularly appealing, being somewhat vitriolic in its nature. There were valid points, but, if I may say so, he might have more influence if he put things rather more gently and explained how he thinks that they could be done. He emphasised what needs to be done, and on some points I would not challenge him for one moment, but there was little indication of how it could be done. If I were still as deeply involved in the arts and the world outside as I once was, I am not sure that I should be very attracted by the hon. Gentleman's approach. I would find the thought of meeting him in his room rather devastating. In fact, the box office would probably be closed before he finished telling me exactly what he was thinking. Nevertheless, I am sure that his contribution can be valuable from time to time.

The hon. Gentleman emphasised funding. I do not accept that if the Government are forced into economies we should have a level playing field all round. I take exactly the opposite view: I believe that some items of expenditure should be exempt in an economy drive. Indeed, I would go further and say that some types of expenditure, the arts being one, should continue to be increased. I recall that when the Treasury, through its second or third Secretary, was responsible for funding the arts, the arts got the best deal that they had ever had. It was, if I may say so, the cultured at the summit at the Treasury who said to their pals, "Look, we are not going to damage the things that we enjoy." That was when the arts got a really good deal. I am not saying for one moment that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage does not personally take that view, as I know that he does, but he has considerable weight against him on that point.

There was once a time when if I went to the Festival hall or Covent garden or elsewhere I could depend on seeing a considerable number of colleagues. It seems to be a rather different situation today. Whether it is the depression, I do not know, but seldom at Covent garden or at any musical festival do I see a large number of my colleagues anxiously waiting to imbibe culture. So one can weigh up the problems that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has in funding the arts.

I am concerned at the situation in the schools, about which we have just heard. When one considers the arts in this country over the past century, one sees that there has been a remarkable transformation. It is quite extraordinary. One can trace it back to the start of the promenade concerts with Sir Henry Wood. When I was a kid in the 1930s, I used to cycle 73 miles from my home to London, stay with friends for a week, go to the prom each night, paying two shillings, and then cycle 73 miles back again. That was worth while. If we wanted it, that was what we did. In those days, the prom gave one an education in classical music, with some modern works. There was the Wagner night, the Haydn and Schubert night, the Beethoven night on the Friday, the mixed night on the Saturday, and new ones on the Tuesday. It was a well-balanced performance. I believe that the BBC has gone too far now: that basic education is no longer in the proms because it has moved too far in the other direction.

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I do not want anybody to accuse me of going "back to basics", because that is not my attitude. On the other hand, I am not prepared to produce a full-blooded condemnation of atonality and those people referring to it. If one looks at the past, one finds that Beethoven was deeply criticised for his seventh symphony: it was considered far too modern and something that people did not want to listen to. Stravinsky's "Le Sacré du Printemps" was shouted down in Paris in 1913 when it was first performed. I went to the 50th anniversary performance in the Albert hall, with Stravinsky sitting beside me and Monteux, the original conductor, conducting it again. The Albert hall was packed to the ceiling with people who stood and cheered afterwards for minute after minute. One cannot be condemnatory about such things in a general way, however well versed one is in the arts and however high one's position in the country.

Look at what happened to the pictorial arts at the end of the 19th century and to the impressionists when their works were first produced. It took two intelligent Russians to go to Paris constantly and buy up the works so that today the Hermitage in St. Petersburg has the finest collection of impressionists. The same is true with the galleries in Moscow. What about Picasso? Look at the reception that he received when he first changed his styles. Now one has to pays millions if one wants a Picasso. We must be careful about saying that we must stick to the basics, because I do not believe that that is justifiable in any way.

After the Education Act 1944, on the basis of what we had on the proms, and the Saturday morning concerts, which were privately financed by Sir Robert Mayer, the educational addition produced the results that we have seen in the past few years. I have already cited the example of the European Community youth orchestra, as it then was. I was one of those who founded it. Our purpose was to show that our continent had a common heritage. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that the French heritage is different from ours, but I would not go far with him on that. The method by which they fund it might be different, but we have a common heritage. When I hear opponents of the European Union saying that we must keep our national heritage, I ask myself what on earth they mean. Are they saying that Shakespeare can be performed only in Stratford-on-Avon and that we should not play Bach, Beethoven or Brahms? That makes no sense whatever. We have a European culture in the widest sense, and that is what we want to continue to maintain. The European Community youth orchestra was formed to show that we were not concerned only with tariffs, agricultural policy, the price of meat, and so on, but that we had a common heritage which we wanted everybody—particularly the young—to share.

Music has the advantage of a common language. Had we gone for the theatre, we would have been in difficulty straightaway. Ballet was possible, but more difficult. We had a competition for members of the orchestra. At first the Germans did not want to take part, as they thought that it would affect their youth orchestras. After the first year, however, they realised that they were missing out on a good enterprise—a European culture—and they came in. We had the same assessment committee—at least two members of it, but a national assessment committee—in each country. I remember the difficulty in which I found myself in the last year that I advised and conducted that orchestra. Of its 126 members, 66—on merit—came from this country. That was entirely due to our educational system and to the youth orchestras that had been built up. For example, many countries could not produce double bass players or people who could play the larger wind instruments. Britain could produce all types of musicians. I had to say that 66 members out of 126 was too big a proportion for one country and that the orchestra's membership had to be spread further, and that was done. That is how we developed what is now the European Union youth orchestra.

My concern is that music education is dropping back. It is difficult to obtain exact expenditure figures because they are accumulated with other types of expenditure, but one can identify the number of children aged 11 or over who are receiving music education, and there is no doubt that there has been a drop of as much as 5 per cent.—I am sure of that. People write to me from all over the country saying, "Our school no longer has a music teacher—it cannot pay for a music teacher." That is a loss. Other people write to me, "Can you help us to buy an instrument for our daughter, who is proving to be a good violinist?" There is a limit to what one can do in that way, however deserving the cause. Those are real needs. If one is to deal fully with the problem, one must focus attention on those real needs rather than make critical remarks about my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. If that is done, we may secure continued support for other aspects of the arts.

There is no doubt that private funding fell in the recession. That is pointed out by people who have the figures. It may take some years before we retrieve that funding. If one makes cuts in music, one loses out for a long period, and it takes a long time to make that up. If one postpones a construction job for one or two years, it can be restarted, but the same cannot be done with the arts. It cannot be done with young people in orchestras or theatres or in other artistic disciplines such as design. That is why I am much against so-called temporary cuts. Their impact is lengthy and it takes a long time to make up that loss.

Both the Arts Council and our orchestras face difficulties. I hope that my noble Friend Lord Gowrie will review that issue philosophically. I am sure that he will. I have no doubts about his power to put his own views and those of the Arts Council strongly. In the latest episode, the Arts Council wanted a super-orchestra—or two—in London. At present, London has five major symphony orchestras and a growing number of smaller string orchestras and chamber orchestras. The Arts Council concluded that it was not possible for those five to reach the standard of the major orchestras of the world such as the Berlin, Amsterdam, Venice, Chicago, Philadelphia and New York orchestras, and there are people who support the Arts Council in that view. Leading world conductors will come to London if they can bring their own orchestras, but not otherwise. That is partly due to standards and partly because London will not pay the fees that they receive elsewhere. That also comes down to funding.

A growing difficulty in the past two or three years is that fewer musicians want to be contracted to an orchestra permanently or for a period of years. They say, "We would rather keep our freedom; if you want us, telephone us beforehand and we will say whether we are available." That is bound to weaken the strength of a major symphony

orchestra. In some cases, 30 per cent. of an orchestra's strength has to be made up by telephoning musicians who are not contracted to it.

That situation leads to far too low a level of rehearsing. I have known all too many cases of inadequate rehearsing. When I was asked to conduct a Coronation anniversary concert at Kenwood last year, I said that I must have two rehearsals. They said, "You are being very difficult—but if you insist." I said that my second stipulation was that the musicians who played in the first rehearsal must play in the second rehearsal. They said, "Now you are being really difficult—but all right, if you insist." I said that there was a third stipulation—that the musicians who played in the two rehearsals must also play in the concert. They said, "That is going too far—you are asking too much." But they agreed in the end.

There was a previous attempt to establish a super-orchestra, 30 years ago. It was decided that one of the symphony orchestras must go. At the time, I was a trustee of the London symphony orchestra. To everybody's surprise, the doomed orchestra, the philharmonic, suddenly received royal support and became the Royal Philharmonic orchestra—so then they could not get rid of it. Thirty years later, that has been tried again and ended in failure. My only advice is that everything must be worked out and agreed beforehand, and then be carried through. Otherwise one suffers, as Lord Palumbo unfortunately suffered, from a complete turnround in orchestras.

The Birmingham symphony and Hallé orchestras also had intense financial difficulties. Simon Rattle said, "Unless you get this, I go." That is a most unhappy position. I want the funding of orchestras improved, and I will give figures to illustrate my argument.

The Berlin philharmonic has a total income of £16.2 million. All its members are on contract. They are ordered when to go on holiday, and they are forbidden to play anywhere else when they are on holiday. They meet all their obligations to the Berliners. The Chicago orchestra has an income of £22.55 million, and the New York philharmonic has £16.7 million. The orchestra with the largest financing in this country is the London symphony orchestra, with £7.7 million—only one third Chicago's income. The Bournemouth, which I admit is my local orchestra, has an income of £4.82 million, which is only about half that of the London symphony orchestra. The contrasts are immense.

In the United States, almost all the funding is from private sources—from concert revenue or from supporters. That is because the Americans have a tradition of private charity, and tax incentives to make donations are considerable whereas those in this country are not. The tax incentives in the UK to keep one's money in a family trust are great, and there is not the incentive to use money from a trust to support orchestras or other forms of the arts. I suggest to those who are working on the issue that tax changes could be enormously influential in persuading companies and individuals to be charitable towards the arts and towards musicians in particular.

Mr. Jessel: Although I accept some of my right hon. Friend's points, is he not denigrating some of our symphony orchestras a little too much? Some of our best orchestras play to a brilliant, precise and inspired standard and display a high level of musicianship. With the greatest respect, my right hon. Friend should pay more tribute to those orchestras' strengths and standards.

Sir Edward Heath: I am trying to put our orchestras in a world perspective. Orchestra players know the position perfectly well. Many of them are no longer contracted to a symphony orchestra because they prefer to keep their individual freedom and perform when they feel like it, which I regret. If my hon. Friend is asking how our orchestras compare, I will give him my view in private. I am not denigrating any of the British orchestras—I am pointing out the difficulties that they face. We shall get nowhere and do no one any good if we do not acknowledge those difficulties. The only way to improve matters is by recognising them and describing what action should be taken.

The Berlin philharmonic has an income of £16.2 million. Income from its concerts totals £6.9 million; the rest of its revenue comes from Berlin's local government, the state or Bonn. The position is the same in Hamburg. I do not have the figures for Hamburg, but they may be higher as Hamburg has the opera. In Europe, Governments willingly make full contributions because they realise the importance of music and the arts to their countries.

The facts are there for all of us to see. In the rest of the arts—for example, in architecture and in pictures—we have done very well, but the remarkable achievements of this century and, in particular, of the past 50 years should not be gradually whittled away by a number of forces, some of which I have described.

I give the Secretary of State my full support for everything that he wants to do to reach the position that the public and those involved with the arts want to reach. The interest and demand is there. That is why so many people are sad about what is happening in our schools and that we cannot give greater support to the things that they value.

5.21 pm

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) not only because of his knowledge of these matters but because of his insight into what he described as the more monetarist wing of the Conservative party and the things for which it was responsible. Some of my speech will relate to that more monetarist wing. I can only sadly reflect, as I am sure the right hon. Gentleman does, that some of the policies that that wing proposed, not least the Broadcasting Act 1990, would never have been enacted if the less monetarist wing of the Conservative party had not been prepared to vote for it. I want to deal with those who suffered the consequences of that Act.

The Secretary of State did not refer to broadcasting in his opening speech, but I make no apology for doing so. I am sure that the House supports the view that broadcasting policy is of enormous importance in any debate on the arts.

Mr. Dicks: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This, too, is of importance. As usual, there is an awful smell of cooking coming up as a result of the artistic creativity of the chefs in the kitchen. Will someone ask them to redirect the smells elsewhere?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. The matter will be looked into.

Mr. Grocott: I am enjoying the smell of cooking; we should have a vote before anything precipitate is done.

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup referred to the way in which events have developed, including the proms. If I am to justify concentrating my

[Mr. Grocott]

remarks on broadcasting, I need do no more than to say that it is only via broadcasting that the arts are made available to millions of people. I confess that I am not a great fan of the proms or of the last night of the proms, but I acknowledge that 5 million people watched it on television on 11 September last year and that the "Young Musician of the Year" finals this year, which I watched and enjoyed, were watched by 1.3 million people. That attracted a smaller audience for a less widely publicised event. None the less, a huge number of people watched it. I always measure audiences against the number of people at Wembley on cup final day. The audience for the "Young Musician of the Year" finals was about 13 times as high as the number at Wembley on cup final day. That audience was of tremendous importance.

I say with a great sense of urgency that something precious in this country—the structure of broadcasting and the quality of programmes that it delivers—is in danger of collapsing. It is the Secretary of State's responsibility to ensure that it does not do so. I will not say that the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup reflects a golden age because I did not regard the years 1970 to 1974 as such, but some of the things that have happened to broadcasting as a result of deliberate Government policy would have been unthinkable during that earlier Tory Administration or under any Labour Administration.

I do not need to establish the credentials of British broadcasting, which are well known and understood. British television is recognised as being among the best, if not the best, in the world. It broadcasts a huge range of high-quality programmes and transmits to most homes in this country—21.5 million, or 98 per cent. of households that have access to terrestrial television. That is almost everyone.

The threat to terrestrial television must be dealt with urgently by the Government. At its best, broadcasting enriches our lives. We watch, on average, 25 hours of television a week. That is a lot of hours a week, but television is far more important to the housebound, the elderly, people with disabilities and children. A lot has been said recently about the damaging effect of television on children. Good-quality children's programmes enhance children's lives, just as directed programming enhances the lives of other groups in the community.

It is no understatement to say that broadcasting is in a state of crisis. I shall give specific examples that need to be dealt with rapidly. The first relates to job losses. I should declare a degree of self-interest in that matter, although I no longer have a direct interest. The television industry has suffered enormous job losses in the past seven years, before and immediately after the implementation of the Broadcasting Act. In 1987, 16,937 people were employed in ITV; by 1993, the number had halved to 8,000. In the same period, the BBC shed one in four jobs. A lot of people will say that the job losses were among bureaucrats, who we could do without. But if he is honest, the Secretary of State will know from his visits to different television centres that many of those who lost their jobs were highly skilled and well trained: they included sound engineers, vision mixers, production assistants, directors, and producers, who had a range of broadcasting skills. They have been lost and they will be extraordinarily difficult to replace. It will not happen through the so-called independent sector, which lives off the experience and expertise that was built up in the public sector of old.

Secondly, as many of us predicted, there has been an almost inevitable lowering of standards in broadcasting. I am talking about a deterioration not in the quality of programmes but in the ethos surrounding their production. Not long ago, the Public Accounts Committee published a report on the way in which the ethos of the civil service has steadily gone down hill. The same is happening rapidly in broadcasting. It is all to do with the creeping and overlapping commercial interests that come into the production of programmes. Am I the only person in the country who does not like programmes being sponsored by commercial organisations? Does it really add anything to "Play Your Cards Right" that it is sponsored by *The Sun* newspaper? Does it add anything to "Rumpole" to say that a particular brand of drink is sponsoring it? Is there any limit to the amount of sponsorship money that will go to programmes?

Let us take the example of programmes of national interest. I am not being entirely facetious in saying that, if present trends continue, the state opening of Parliament will one day be sponsored by a tobacco company and will be available exclusively on Sky. That is the logic of the way in which the financing of programmes is developing. Programmes go to the highest bidder. That includes the largest amount of sponsorship money that happens to be available. If the programme is available only to a restricted audience, so be it. That is the response of so many people.

On the next matter, perhaps I may appeal to the Secretary of State, with his love of sport. Predictably—I am not being wise after the event; many of us have said this time and again—the proliferation of channels does not mean the extension of choice. It is not an inevitable consequence of the number of channels being increased that we get more choice. If the channels all produce the same stuff and a lot of it is dross, there is no extension of choice whatever. We know one specific way in which there has been a reduction in choice. Again, I appeal to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Dicks: The hon. Gentleman uses the phrase, "It is dross". With respect, who is he to decide what someone else wants to watch and what they find interesting?

Mr. Grocott: I have heard the hon. Gentleman develop that argument in the past. He knows very little if he thinks that the delivery of television programmes, even on totally deregulated commercial channels, is entirely a matter of what the audience wants. It is not merely a matter of responding to audiences in the way that the hon. Gentleman, in his populist way, wants. Let me assure him that it is all to do with much more complicated machinations between advertisers, money men and accountants. The type of television that he seems to want is dominated by the accountants and advertisers, not by the programme makers and the people.

One area in which we have restricted choice is the availability of many key sporting events to most of our constituents. At one stage, we would have been able to watch Brian Lara score his 375 the other day live on terrestrial television. We certainly would have been able to see the edited highlights in a package in the evening. We cannot see it now. It is available only to people who have access to Sky. We shall not be able to watch the Ryder Cup

next time round. We cannot watch the key premier league football games. Again, football is a national sport. Those of us who not only watch it on television but go to matches regularly want to see the best of British football on television.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): One can see the rugby league.

Mr. Grocott: My hon. Friend is right. We can see the rugby league—but for how much longer if present trends continue, I do not know. What else will go before long? Will it be Wimbledon next? It may well be. I am less concerned about Wimbledon than about premier league football, but they are both national events and part of our national heritage. If we make them exclusive to satellite television, we shall lose something valuable and important. Our choice is being restricted, as many of us predicted it would, with the deregulation of the media.

What else is happening? We are seeing the inevitable and inexorable growth of monopoly power within the media. We must deal with that because it is extremely important. It has been dramatic in independent television. We all know that, in effect, independent television is controlled by three people: Messrs. Green, Hollick and Robinson. I make no comment about them as individuals except to describe how rapid the change has been.

Two years ago, Michael Green, or his company, did not own one television company. He acquired the franchise for Carlton. Within a short period, the bosses of television managed to persuade the Secretary of State that the rules by which they had happily been prepared to abide when they bid for the franchises were no good. They said that they were wrong and unfair to them. So the rules were relaxed and Carlton acquired Central, which in turn has shares in GMTV and substantial interests in ITN. So, from nowhere, one individual has acquired a tremendously powerful voice within the world of commercial television. I do not like such growths in monopoly control.

There is also the scandal of the protected position of Sky Television and Rupert Murdoch. Perhaps some Conservative Members have more detached views of Rupert Murdoch these days than they did when the privileges were announced. His newspapers are temporarily not quite so friendly to the Conservative party as they were a few years ago. Suddenly and rather belatedly the Prime Minister and perhaps the Secretary of State have discovered that the tabloid newspapers influence people. Ministers complain about tabloid newspapers determining who is in the Cabinet. The Secretary of State's predecessor was particularly vitriolic on that point.

Opposition Members have for many years complained that tabloid newspapers can be an important determining factor in who wins general elections. So perhaps the growth of monopoly power should concern us all. We should be worried that, as well as owning all the Sky channels, one individual owns 35 per cent. of the newspapers in Britain.

I had a real insight into the power that cross-media ownership brings with it when a few weeks ago I talked to an experienced producer who had made a programme for Sky Television. He had made dozens of programmes previously for terrestrial television. The usual programme launch was held. The press were invited along and told that it would be a splendid programme—

Mr. Cormack: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sorry to interrupt, but the Order Paper says that this is a debate on the arts. Although the hon. Gentleman made a passing reference to the arts at the beginning of his speech, he seems to be talking about all the other responsibilities of the Secretary of State and not about the arts.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, but the debate is actually on the Adjournment. That is the real debate.

Mr. Grocott: I expected a challenge along those lines, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman wants to speak. Perhaps he was motivated, at least in part, by a hope that I would sit down fairly soon. I can assure him that I shall do just that. I do not think that it would need a great deal to persuade the House that if broadcasting in the public service sense to which we have been accustomed in Britain collapsed—in many respects it is in danger of doing just that—the arts of which the hon. Gentleman is so fond would lose a massive part of their audience.

I shall finish the true tale about the experience of the producer who found himself launching a programme that he had made for Sky rather than for the terrestrial channels for which he had always worked in the past. To his absolute amazement, the press attended in great numbers the routine press call to the launch of a programme. The producer suddenly realised that the journalists were there because the newspapers were owned by the same people who owned the television station for which he had made the programme. Sure enough, there were splendid write-ups in the said newspapers the following day. That is the implication of cross-media ownership. If Conservative Members cannot see the importance of that, I shall be very concerned indeed.

The Secretary of State has made one mistake in allowing television companies to take one another over. I hope that he does not make another mistake by allowing newspapers and television companies to become even more enmeshed with one another than they have been in the past.

I shall now suggest what the Secretary of State should consider. My first suggestion is a pretty impassioned plea. I get sick and tired of people being mesmerised by technology. I hear all sorts of talk about communications super-highways. I appeal to the Secretary of State to understand—I am sure that he does—that the fact that the same technology may be used to order a takeaway pizza as could be used to deliver live the film of the dismantling of the Berlin wall does not mean that the two are of equal importance or need the same regulatory system. The right hon. Gentleman's area of responsibility is crucially different from that of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I hope that he will not neglect the importance of preserving and defending standards in that area of responsibility.

Secondly, the Secretary of State should not be mesmerised by all the talk about the viewer penetration achieved by Sky, cable and satellite television. As I said, 21.5 million households have access to terrestrial channels. A staggering audience of 24 million people recently watched Torvill and Dean in the finals of a competition. However, only 3 million households have satellite and cable television and even the industry estimates that there

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will only be about 10 million households by 2000. No cable or satellite channel will be able to reach the audience that terrestrial television reaches today within the lifetime of anyone present. Therefore, if the Secretary of State does not concentrate on defending and protecting terrestrial television, with all its qualities, he will not be devoting himself to the most important task.

I must add a rider. At the moment there is no level playing field: the contest between cable and satellite television and the terrestrial channels is just not fair. No rules worth speaking of govern cable and satellite channels. They are not required to buy British or even European Community productions. The controls over what they can do, for example with sponsorship and advertising, are much looser.

Mr. Brooke: Quotas are set out governing European productions because they emanate from a European Union directive—British production obviously falls within that quota. How does the hon. Gentleman square those quotas, on which the channels are obliged to report and to which we have frequently referred in the House, with his statement that such channels are not subject to any controls?

Mr. Grocott: I can only give the right hon. Gentleman the statistics for the proportion of domestically produced material used. In 1992, 65 per cent. of BBC 1 and BBC 2 output was made up of original home-produced material and 60 per cent. of ITV and Channel 4 material was home produced. In the same year, 29 per cent. of material used by BSkyB was home produced and most of it was news and sport.

Whatever the rules and regulations, the expansion of cable and satellite television has not benefited British or even European Community domestic production. By and large, that expansion has been fuelled through cheap imports and the right hon. Gentleman knows exactly how the system operates.

Mr. Brooke: I was merely querying the hon. Gentleman's statement that those companies are under no controls. The directive establishes an obligation to meet the quotas where practical. The obligation is subject to that condition and the Commission takes that into account. However, the upward thrust of production must be towards meeting the quota figures.

Mr. Grocott: The right hon. Gentleman has answered his own intervention. There is no effective control—perhaps I missed a word out—and the rules do not apply equally to cable, satellite and terrestrial channels. No amount of playing with words will alter that fact.

I had not intended to go down that road, but since the Secretary of State tempts me I shall do so. I was stunned to learn today that, under the British regulatory framework, GMTV—the morning breakfast television programme—has had its regulations loosened by the television authority. The company was established only 18 months ago and knew what it was bidding for. It knew the rules, the terms and all the rest and worked out the price, but it has had its obligations eased unilaterally. What is worse, according to the report in the *Financial Times* today, GMTV said that it had implemented the reduction in the quotas—it broke the rules—in advance of the television authority's ruling and took "a calculated risk". Is that the way to regulate? The company hoped that the regulators would change their minds and ignored the regulations for the time being. That is not a regulatory system; it is a disgrace.

Added to that, GMTV is substantially owned by two of the moguls of the independent television industry, Carlton Communications and Granada—not exactly companies that have had it rough since the Broadcasting Act was passed. They seem to have been continuously successful in lobbying to have the rules changed in their favour, despite the fact that they committed themselves so recently to the system.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): Is my hon. Friend aware that the same thing is happening in radio? Jazz FM quite properly submitted a bid to produce a jazz network, but has largely become a purveyor of American soul and alternative pop music, which is a great shame. The hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) objected that my hon. Friend's contribution did not deal with the arts, but television is at the heart of that subject. By the turn of the century the entertainment industry will be bigger than any other industry in America. It will be the biggest money earner. If we lose our ability to produce television programmes, radio programmes and films, we will also lose an important amount of money—perhaps our most important money earner—as well as our production ability in many sectors of the arts.

Mr. Grocott: I wholeheartedly agree with my hon. Friend and I know that he cares as passionately as I do about such matters.

I am conscious of the time. Hon. Members may be looking nervously at my notes, fearing that I will go on for much longer and I would like to draw the attention of the Secretary of State to many other subjects, but perhaps I can do so in correspondence rather than by taking up the time of the House.

The Secretary of State normally has a gentle and timeless approach to some of these problems and I urge him to realise that they are a matter of urgency. During the past few years one of the best broadcasting systems in the world has gone down hill rapidly because of the Government's lack of willingness to understand that technology is the servant, not the master, and that free market forces will not deliver quality programmes. If I can only persuade the right hon. Gentleman of those two facts, I will not have wasted my time.

5.47 pm

Mr. Tim Renton (Mid-Sussex): I do not intend to follow the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) by devoting the greater part of my remarks to broadcasting, although I understand that his passion and enthusiasm for the subject led him to do so.

While I was at the Home Office, I was one of the architects of the Broadcasting Act 1990. The hon. Member for The Wrekin should surely bear in mind that, by agreeing to the mergers, for example, between Carlton and Central, to which he referred, three companies—Carlton, Meridian and Granada—dominate the ITV world and that one of the reasons for the mergers was to ensure that, when competing with Sky and the BBC, the ITV companies were substantial enough to deliver the hours of creative programming of good quality that they had committed themselves to in their franchise applications.

There is no point in having 10, 12 or 14 independent television companies all committed, under their franchise applications, to creative and constructive programming if their budgets are so small and their audience figures so limited that that programming has little worth or value. That is one of the aspects that the hon. Member for The Wrekin ignored.

I fully understand some of the hon. Member's other arguments and share his concern about the growing dominance of Sky in television, but a very important function of the mergers is that the Independent Television Commission, with the majors that have survived, should make absolutely certain that the commitments to important new creative programming are maintained. They should offer programming that not only we can enjoy, but produce programmes such as "Jewel in the Crown", which is so often quoted, that have a ready appeal on the world markets.

Mr. Maclennan: Is the right hon. Gentleman saying that when those companies gave their undertakings to obtain the franchise they did not expect to be able to give full weight to those undertakings unless they were involved in mergers? That was not the impression that they gave.

Mr. Renton: I will not follow the hon. Gentleman down that path. I am sure that he will try to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so he will be able to pursue that argument. Television is a rapidly changing world and competition in it changes quickly. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has therefore had to be aware of those changes.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) has strong support from me in one respect, because I find the combination of discussing the arts amidst the strong smell of overcooked beef an interesting but unpleasant experience. Perhaps it is the House's definition of nouvelle cuisine. We hear a great deal about the use of new technology in the House, but that combination is a remarkable presentation of it. I hope that your efforts, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to suppress those smells will soon be successful.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State not only on the positive, determined and successful role that he has brought to weaving together the different parts of his important Department—heritage, sport and tourism, as well as the arts and broadcasting—but on a rather mundane success: that he has managed to have a debate on the arts today. In the 18 months that I was Arts Minister—I found that a pleasant, happy time—I never succeeded in persuading the business managers that we should have a debate on the arts. Perhaps we should have council elections more frequently, so that we can have more debates on the subject.

One of the permanent features of such debates is the position of the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) as Opposition spokesman on the arts. I suspect that he was in the same position in the debate in July 1990.

Mr. Fisher: And many years before that.

Mr. Renton: Yes, indeed.

As I listened to the hon. Gentleman this afternoon, I felt that he was slightly like Sleeping Beauty. He had been in the thicket of briar for so long, frozen into silence, that when he was given the chance to speak the words poured out almost without cessation. At times, listening to him was a little bit like reading a long book by James Joyce, because it was rather hard to know where the commas would come, let alone the full stops or, indeed, where the book would end. I know of his passion for the subject and I admire him for his persistence in speaking about the arts on behalf of the Opposition. Long may he continue to do so.

The hon. Gentleman tends to be a Cassandra in sackcloth and ashes, who runs around complaining that everything is going wrong with the world of the arts. He behaved like that frequently when I was Arts Minister and I used regularly to remind him that in 1989-90 we had managed to get a record 14 per cent. increase in the budget for the Arts Council, which meant another £21 million for it. The hon. Gentleman never listened to me.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) said, the hon. Gentleman might do his cause better if he occasionally spoke with more enthusiasm and positive verve about the many good things that are happening in the arts in Britain today, of which he is well aware.

Mr. Enright: Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that, although Cassandra was all doom and gloom, she was always correct?

Mr. Renton: I am not sure whether she was a mythical prophetess or not.

Mr. Dicks: I thought she was a ballet dancer.

Mr. Renton: That shows that some of us have still got a long way to go. Perhaps my hon. Friend's mind will be changed by the end of the debate.

Only this morning, the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central and I were debating on a programme on Channel 4. I heard much the same notes of Cassandra—I mention the word again—from him then. I reminded him that if we walked just a few hundred yards from 4 Millbank, where the programme was made, we would come to the Tate. Its exhibition on Picasso and the relationship between his paintings and his sculpture is the most successful that it has ever staged. The Tate, funded as it is by the Government, has had a number of extremely successful years and it can now look forward to trying to develop a gallery of modern art on the old Bankside power station site. That example, which is so close to the House, is a living exemplar to us of how one of our major galleries is doing so well and attracting huge crowds.

One of the pleasant things that one notices when driving by the Tate at lunchtime is the enormous number of young people who are congregated on the steps of the gallery. They are there talking, eating sandwiches and using the Tate as a place to get together. That is exactly what a major art gallery should be like.

My old friend, Lord Gowrie, whose letter of 4 May, sent to us all, has already been quoted in the debate, has not only shown, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, that he will be a fierce and independent defender of arts interests as chairman of the Arts Council, but he concluded his letter with the words:

"The arts need nurturing, not spoiling."

The purpose of the debate is to enable us, with our different viewpoints, to consider what is the best way to nurture rather than spoil the arts.

I should declare a number of interests, which are all recorded in the Register of Members' Interests, because I

[Mr. Renton]

am the patron, trustee or director of a number of arts bodies. I am also the chairman of a small start-up company, Interactive Telephone Services, which has interests in some of these areas. I should like to consider the way in which arts funding takes place. After Lord Palumbo released his mantle of chairman of the Arts Council he took a good swipe at me in an article in *The Sunday Times* for comments that I had made, as Arts Minister and subsequently, about the future of the Arts Council. Now that the Department of National Heritage and the 10 English regional arts boards are well established, I questioned the future role of the council as another intervening layer—a third layer—of authority, administration, spending and committees, governing how the precious sums of money that are available to the arts are distributed. Now that the Department is so well set, I argue that we should consider whether there was a case for major national clients such as the national theatre, the south bank, the two opera companies in London and national orchestras to be funded directly by my right hon. Friend's Department rather than through the Arts Council.

I have always argued that case with absolutely no ill will to the Arts Council; after all, I have many friends who have served on its committees and board. I wish Lord Gowrie, whom I greatly respect, every possible success in his job. I also wish the same to Mary Allen, who is the new secretary general. She has a good stage career behind her, so she must have learnt a lot from that about the ups and downs of life and must be used to having the spotlight, sometimes a critical one, focused on her.

However, I confess that I was always somewhat surprised at the amount of upset that those remarks of mine caused, not least to Lord Palumbo, because, after all, first the Office of Arts and Libraries and now the Department of National Heritage have funded the major museums and galleries directly. The British museum, the British library, the Tate gallery, the Victoria and Albert museum, the science museum, the natural history museum and the national gallery receive their moneys directly from the Government. Of course, they fight for more money—they use their sharp elbows to try to achieve that end—but, in my experience, that has always been a successful and good relationship.

If the Tate gallery, in the Turner prize awards, shows a collection of extremely modern exhibitions, including 12 tonnes of rice with red neon tubes down the middle, as it did recently, that does not cause the Minister to become upset. He does not say that surely there should be a portrait from the Royal College of Art there—a naturalist portrait —or that a portrait of the Minister should have been on the short list.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): Oh no.

Mr. Renton: No indeed. I say that only to show that that is a successful, satisfactory relationship. If that is so between the Department and the museums and galleries, why is it thought to be impossible between the Department and the theatres and the orchestras or the opera companies?

I confess that I often felt that the hostility with which my remarks were received by senior people in the Arts Council showed an unwillingness to think the unthinkable, an hostility to considering fundamental change, that is often a characteristic of a dying organisation or an organisation that has been in place for a long time without looking at itself and trying to revive itself actively enough.

There will have to be a change in the organisation of arts funding. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State reminded us that 42 more organisations had now been *delegated* to the 10 regional arts boards. I am not surprised by that. I am delighted by it. After all, the regional arts boards are now all set up. By and large, they have strong chairmen, good boards and good directors. I am sure that they will expect to be increasingly responsible for more and more bodies in their areas.

Leading on from that, one must reach the conclusion that, between the Department of National Heritage, the Arts Council and the regional arts boards, three organisations are concerned with arts funding. Is that not one organisation too many, consuming too much administration money, possibly interfering with each other too much? There is another strain to my thought, which is that the advent of large sums from the national lottery, which I greatly welcome—when I was Arts Minister, I always strongly supported the concept that we should have a national lottery—will, in the case of the Arts Council, for example, perhaps double its budget. There will be an enormous increase in the sums of money available to the national heritage memorial fund. That, in turn, should cause radical thinking about the way in which arts funding is organised.

The Millennium Commission, which I greatly welcome, and which will be chaired by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, will have to take direct decisions about which project to support for the year 2000. I believe that, in taking those decisions, the Millennium Commission will show that there is a principle of ministerial intervention in deciding the relative importance of one arts project versus another. That principle will be established.

I believe—I realise that what I shall say will cause some disturbance among my friends on the Government Front Bench—that that will lead to a consideration of the validity of the arm's-length principle that Ministers do not, notionally at least, intervene in the way in which arts budgets are spent.

I remember that on the first day that I arrived in the Office of Arts and Libraries I was told about the arm's-length principle. I think that that very afternoon, three Members of Parliament came to see me to plead that London City ballet should continue to receive a large subsidy. I said, "That is nothing to do with me; it is the arm's-length principle. It is entirely up to the Arts Council." I will not say from which side of the House the Members of Parliament came. They said, "Come off it, Minister. You can tell the Arts Council what to do. The London City ballet is very good news and you should jolly well make certain that it continues to receive the money that they have always had. We like them very much and you should certainly go and tell Lord Palumbo what to do."

Putting the London City ballet on one side, when the Royal Opera house or the national theatre or the south bank need large sums of money for backstage restoration at the opera house, for building repairs at the national theatre, or for redevelopment of the south bank, it is to the Minister that they go. They speak to him about it because they hope that he will find some way of producing a golden key and unlocking a door which will produce funds for them that would not otherwise be available. That happened in the

days when my noble Friend Lord Gowrie was Arts Minister, when Sir Richard Luce was Arts Minister and when I was Arts Minister.

When it became possible for the freehold of the Coliseum to be bought because the Holmes-à-Court estate showed its potential willingness to sell it, it was to me as the Minister that English National Opera made its representations, hoping that I would be able to find the money with which the freehold could be purchased. I am glad to say that, in the end, I was able to persuade the Chief Secretary to do just that.

I accept that the arm's-length principle is deeply useful to Ministers. It enables them to say, "This awkward decision is not mine; it is the Arts Council's." There must be a de minimis rule whereby many decisions will be, and should always be, delegated to the Arts Council or the regional arts boards.

However, I do not enormously like pretence. Perhaps that is why I am not a very good politician. I have always thought that there was a good deal of pretence behind the arm's-length principle. In the future, the strength of the regional arts boards, the strong Department of National Heritage with a Secretary of State who sits in the Cabinet, the national lottery moneys and the Millennium Commission will require the Department of National Heritage to be more in the front line, establishing its own priorities, and in the firing line. That does not give me the worries that it appears to give so many other people. I wholly respect my right hon. Friend's judgment in that respect.

Mr. Brooke: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the cases that he cited as exceptions to the general principle have tended to concentrate on capital projects rather than on the revenue funding of specific artistic institutions and productions, and that he is taking us on to slightly marshy ground if he suggests that Ministers should be involved in lottery distribution? We are determined to make certain that that is additional to public expenditure.

Mr. Renton: I accept that and I am wholly behind the principle that the lottery money should be in addition to existing public expenditure. I was only making the subsidiary point because I am not in any sense trying to lay down the rules. However, the Millennium Commission, which my right hon. Friend chairs and on which the President of the Board of Trade sits, I believe, as a second Cabinet Minister, will be required to take decisions about the way in which its share of the lottery money is spent. Those are likely to be capital projects, and Ministers will be in the front line. I welcome that and do not feel the great concern that many others have always shown on that issue.

I am immensely optimistic about the future of art, orchestras and galleries in Britain. Despite all the funding difficulties, the past 10 years have seen a renaissance of all kinds of art—from different cultures and ethnic origins—often helped by local authority money, patronage, sponsorship and the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts, and I am sure that that will continue.

A few weekends ago, I visited the Tate of the West for the first time, in the company of Sir Richard Carew Pole, without whose persistence the Tate of the West would not have been built. It was also funded largely by money from the Cornwall county council. It was a joy to be there, not only to see the gallery and look out on the famous beach which Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth looked at, as one painted and the other sculpted, but to hear subsequently from Sir Richard Carew Pole about an investigation that had been conducted in the town only some 10 months after the gallery had opened, in which all local traders were asked what effect the gallery had had on their businesses. The vast majority said that the effect was thoroughly positive—there were more tourists, they were doing more business, and the whole town seemed to have been woken up again. It was more active and lively, and people were looking forward more positively than they had before that relatively small gallery had been built. That is a marvellous example of what artistic rebuilding in the centre of towns throughout the country can do in creating renaissances.

Not long ago, I was asked—I accepted with great pleasure—to review a book by my old friend, Sir Alan Peacock, who was chairman of the Scottish Arts Council and a combination of a formidable brain, a musician, economist and great iconoclast in the arts world. In his book, he quoted with approval the comment of two American professors that

"few of us are willing to take the responsibility of passing on to future generations a country whose beauty has been destroyed".

I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House will share that sentiment in this unusual arts debate this afternoon. By whatever means we arrive at it, we all wish to ensure that this country's beauty will be not destroyed but indefinitely preserved, added to and made more accessible to more people.

6.12 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The debate has been well justified by all the contributions so far. I only wish that these occasions did not occur simply because the Secretary of State does not want to play a part in the local elections in Westminster.

The debate's reflective tone, exemplified by the former Minister for the Arts, the right hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton), is of greater value than the partisan character that tends to divide the House when we debate other matters. It is not because a consensus exists in the House—there are different angles of vision.

The Labour party spokesman, the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher), speaks with great passion on, and an obvious commitment to, these matters. He does not simulate his sense of outrage that the Secretary of State did not do better for the arts in the public expenditure round.

I do not profess to take the same tone, although I share the hon. Gentleman's disappointment, for the reasons that have been spelt out dispassionately by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath). He made the important point that, when public spending is cut from the performing arts, it has a permanent or at least long-term effect. The postponement of capital projects is one thing, but the cutting away of funds from a living performing company can be extremely damaging.

The right hon. Member for Mid-Sussex asked whether the Arts Council was necessary and whether the arm's-length principle was simply a form of humbug. An answer lies in what the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup said about the history of arts funding. He recalled the lack of support for the arts during the bleak 1930s of his childhood and contrasted it with what happened in the post-war period. It is not entirely a propter hoc fallacy to reflect on the effect on the arts as a result of

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the report of the committee chaired by Lord Keynes and the setting up of the Arts Council in its early form at the end of the war.

Even more significant than the funding role of the Arts Council in the future may be its role as an advocate for the arts. The transfer of responsibility to the regional arts boards for funding some institutions is a healthy step, as it involves local communities more directly in the choice of institutions that they want to back. But there can never be a substitute for the nationally expressed voice of the Arts Council, which seems to have suffered in recent years. I do not blame Lord Palumbo for that because he had some bright ideas and a difficult row to hoe. He deserves credit for the millennium fund, among other things, which he personally advocated. As he returns to private life, I wish him well.

The Arts Council has not sung with a clear voice in recent years. I hope that, under its new chairman, Lord Gowrie, it will not merely be independent—I have no doubt about that—but will have clear authority when it speaks for the nation on those matters. It is not always open to Ministers of the Crown to speak with authority on those issues, not only because they are understandably reticent about expressing artistic priorities but because, within the scheme of things, the arts inevitably do not have the prominence of some other areas of our national life.

In his opening speech, the Secretary of State mentioned "Albertopolis". I was beginning to look forward to a rendition of "Albert and the Lion" by Stanley Holloway, but perhaps we did not have quite the roar that Holloway would have given us. But the Secretary of State reflected an acceptance that the arts lie at the heart of society and are the basis of the nation's civilisation, and that the ideas and notions that they convey are often inexpressible by other means. What may be peculiar to the arts is the fact that, if they are to be part of our environment, new ideas are the prerequisite of success.

It is in the sphere of novelty and innovation that public funding is important. The market does not automatically provide for new forms of expression; nor does it always go to those parts of our country and communities that have not had the opportunity of hearing or seeing a specific art form before. Public funding will always be necessary in order to increase access to the arts in those areas and to spread experimentation. If we under-resource the nation's arts, we shall have to resign ourselves to a duller society.

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup referred to two notable connoisseurs from Russia who had, through their private patronage, brought a wealth of impressionist paintings to the Hermitage. Private patronage has an important part to play in society today —indeed, it always has.

The right hon. Gentleman's reference to those two Russian connoisseurs made me think of a Scottish connoisseur called Alexander Reid, who became a partner in a firm known today as Reid and LeFevre. He spent a formative part of his life in Paris, where he shared accommodation with Vincent Van Gogh. He was the subject of a notable portrait by Van Gogh which, I am happy to say, hangs in the municipal collection in Glasgow. As a result of his wise advice to the tycoons of the day in Glasgow, many of them invested in the purchase of paintings by Sisley, Monet, Pisarro and others whom he had known and admired. Their paintings were, in turn, passed on to the great municipal collection in Glasgow. That happened as a result not of public intervention, but of connoisseurship and wise patronage. That will never be displaced, any more than will the need for public funding.

We cannot rely on sponsorship to provide continuity of artistic endeavour, which is why the Secretary of State must win his battles with the Treasury. There has been generous sponsorship from a number of major national companies. The Secretary of State mentioned two—British Telecom, with its involvement in orchestras, and the Allied Lyons link with the Royal Shakespeare company. Those sponsorships are welcome, but we must remember how private sponsorship failed the Royal Shakespeare company for a time, and there were dark nights in the Barbican. We must recall how close the Barbican came to losing that central part of our current national artistic provision.

Those who sponsor the arts are conscious that they cannot provide core funding, but can only help to boost it and enable those involved in the arts to do better work and to take their work more widely around the country.

I shall spare the Secretary of State a lecture on the importance of the arts, as I do not doubt that he well understands the significance of the arts to our national economy. If he is looking for a job in the future, he could do worse than chair the British Tourist Authority. Were he deployed in that role, his recounting of the excellence to be discovered in Britain today would doubtless bring many more visitors to our shores. He is right to draw attention to the extraordinary quality of work being done in all parts of Britain today—not only by those professionals whose contribution is admired throughout the world, but by amateurs and those who enjoy participating in the arts and the community, even in simple ways. Their contribution to the arts is of immense importance. Our funding policy can never lose sight of the importance of encouraging the young to have an understanding and appreciation of the arts.

Like the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup, I am concerned about the evident decline in support for education in the arts. That is not the direct responsibility of the Secretary of State, but it must cause him concern. I hope that he will discuss with his colleagues what more can be done to provide musical instrumental training of the young. The treatment of music in the curriculum and of the arts generally appears not to have fostered the acquisition of those skills. The fact that itinerant, peripatetic music teachers are being withdrawn from schools in rural regions is disturbing.

Another issue for which the Secretary of State is not directly responsible, but which has caused great anxiety in the arts world, is that of discretionary grants for the performing arts in unrecognised institutions. The issue of who enters the performing arts is becoming an increasingly haphazard process which appears to depend increasingly on where one lives and how rich one's parents are, not on one's talent or whether one is likely to become the next Peggy Ashcroft or John Gielgud. That is not acceptable and I hope that the Secretary of State or, when he winds up the debate, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage will mention that problem. It is not directly a matter for them, but it is giving rise to justifiable concern.

The arts play a role in society that goes far beyond the mere provision of leisure occupation. The arts also have a valuable therapeutic role, as those of us who are interested

in penal policy—as I am, wearing another hat—can vouchsafe. In prisons we see remarkable examples of prisoners involved both in performing and in sharing the experience. Such activity helps to re-educate them, and to correct their view of themselves and their understanding of the world to which they must ultimately be returned—it should not be left entirely to happenstance.

It is desirable that such a role, as played by artistic organisations, should be enlarged and enhanced for the civilising effect it has on those people in our society who are much in need of it.

Despite the Secretary of State's recitation of the strengths of the arts world in Britain today, there are a number of areas of weakness and great concern. I do not wish to produce a shopping list of demands, because it would be a long one, but I must allude to the plight of the orchestras. Too many of them are in heavy deficit. If I were to single out one orchestra for particular attention, it would be the home orchestra of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup—the Bournemouth symphony orchestra. It services a substantial area of southern England and I understand that it has a deficit of £250,000, but has fewer resources to draw on than some of the better-known London orchestras. Although the Minister takes the view that he does about the arm's-length principle, I hope that he will have a word with Lord Gowrie about that orchestra.

The right hon. Member for Mid-Sussex is correct in recognising that things will change. One should not simply mouth support for the arm's-length principle when, in reality, ministerial influence exists and can be exercised beneficently. But if the Minister seeks to wind up the Arts Council, I think that I am prepared to have my cake and eat it.

I also draw the Secretary of State's attention to the extraordinary importance of the BBC to the arts. It is particularly important to draw attention to it at the time of the review of its charter. The BBC's orchestras alone constitute one of our greatest national advantages. They are particularly important in those parts of the country that do not have great resident orchestras. The orchestras travel to small communities and play new music. Orchestra members are allowed the flexibility to play in small groups and in reduced numbers in halls that could not accommodate full-size orchestras, which, of course, is the case in many parts of the country.

There is evidence that the BBC is looking for ways of disembarrassing itself of the cost of financing its orchestras. If that were to happen on a major scale, the current underfunding problems faced by other orchestras would become immensely more difficult to deal with. Although it may be an historical anomaly that the BBC has been able to create great orchestras, they are an asset which we should not allow to slip away through inadvertence or by putting pressure upon the BBC's funding arrangements and making it rethink the appropriateness of what it does.

That is only one of the many ways in which the BBC is a bountiful donor to the artistic world, but it is perhaps the one which is most seriously at risk at this time.

I hope that the Secretary of State will feel that the debate has been worth while and that he will prevail on his colleagues to make debates about the arts a regular feature of our political life. I think that it has been too long since we last had an opportunity to consider these matters.

6.33 pm

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) in the debate, as 38 years ago I used to play with him in a band. We attended the same college; and the president of our college junior common room was the Secretary of State for National Heritage.

I cannot always agree with everything that the hon. Gentleman says, but I share in his tribute to the BBC in respect of music, not only in relation to its splendid seasons of promenade concerts which were mentioned earlier and its upholding of the orchestras to which the hon. Gentleman referred, but also in relation to what it has achieved through BBC Radio 3.

I draw the attention of the Secretary of State—whether or not he discusses it with the new chairman of the Arts Council; I hope that he will—to the whole position of orchestras. The chairman of the Arts Council is also a Balliol man, but I think junior to the other three persons I have mentioned. I hope that the Secretary of State will consider the long-term position of serious music in this country after the BBC's next charter, which I hope will take place.

The National Heritage Committee—upon which I sit—in its report last year about the future of the BBC, while recommending the renewal of the BBC's charter for the next 10 years, anticipated that, with the growth in satellite and cable television channels, and as the time would come when people would be able to call up and put on their telephone bill any video that they wanted, then the whole concept of a daily menu of programmes through four television channels, which everyone is used to, would wither away. The hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott), who also serves on the committee, will confirm what I am saying.

That can hardly fail to have a knock-on effect in the very long term—looking 15 or 20 years ahead—on the four radio channels, including Radio 3. I think that this could possibly have a serious effect on taste for good music in this country, even despite the tremendous acknowledged success of Classic FM, which most people have admired and which has grown so much in the past year.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend, firstly, on the positive survey that he gave the House of the arts scene in Britain and, secondly, on the national lottery. I was glad to hear him say that he was determined to make the proceeds additional to public expenditure. The more often that this is repeated the better, and I was glad to hear him say it again today.I am convinced that history will show that the national lottery was a great achievement for this Parliament and this Government. It will do a tremendous amount of good.

I see Britain as one of the capitals of the arts world. As the Secretary of State said, on any weekday in London there is a vast range of theatres, concerts, opera, ballet, museums, art galleries and special exhibitions. All over Britain there is a tremendous array of cathedrals, abbeys, castles and country houses which are open to the public. It is a tremendous heritage.

My constituency boasts Hampton Court palace and Kneller hall, where the painter used to live and which is now the Royal Military School of Music where British army bands are trained, whose high standards of excellence are the envy of the entire world. We have Horace Walpole's Strawberry hill, which was the beginning of the

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gothic revival in this country. It gave rise to every neo-gothic building that one can see, whether it is the Palace of Westminster, which was rebuilt after the fire; St. Pancras station; every Victorian town hall; or every Victorian school with pointed windows. All those buildings stem from Horace Walpole's Strawberry hill at Twickenham.

We have Marble Hill park, now excellently run by English Heritage following the abolition of the Greater London council. Last September, I had the tremendous privilege for an amateur pianist of playing with the London Mozart Players at the last outdoor concert of the season in Marble Hill park, which was attended by 5,400 people. We have the art gallery at Orleans house, and many fine Georgian houses.

The whole country has a tremendous range of historic buildings whose preservation we all want to support. English Heritage, for example, maintains more than 400 of them. The National Trust, which is a different kind of body, not only looks after buildings, but has a great deal of beautiful countryside and coastline. It also runs 320 properties, including about 190 historic castles and houses.

The Government have many historic buildings open to the public; local authorities have about 500 buildings open to the public; and in private hands there are about 1,300 members of the Historic Houses Association and those 1,300 houses are open to the public. All these statistics were listed in a report of the Select Committee on the National Heritage which was published a couple of months back.

In the performing arts, we have a huge amount of talent. There is a large number of brilliant actors and actresses, brilliant producers such as my constituent and neighbour Dr. Louis Marks, who produced the BBC series "Middlemarch" which attracted so much favourable comment from all over the world. We have superb musicians; we are one of the most musical countries in the world. Here I have to declare an interest as a member of the council of the Association of British Orchestras—although unpaid.

I am very glad that not only my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), but also the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland mentioned orchestras. I should say that my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup is a Balliol man as well, which makes five.

Three right hon. and hon. Members have mentioned orchestras. None of us should apologise for doing so. The whole House would hope that the Secretary of State, the new chairman of the Arts Council and his new secretary general should devote particular attention to the problem of orchestras, which they failed so signally to resolve last year.

Despite what my right hon. Friend said, orchestras are one of Britain's success stories. I believe, as I implied in my earlier intervention, that the standards of the top British orchestras are very high indeed. They achieve the most remarkable standards of accuracy, musicianship and spiritual dimension in their performance. They are extremely close in standard to such orchestras as the Chicago, Vienna, Berlin and Amsterdam orchestras, mentioned by my right hon. Friend.

In the richness and diversity of our orchestras, we have a provision unrivalled anywhere in the world. Their repertoire is tremendously varied and adventurous, although some of them face alarming budgetary difficulties. I hope that the whole House will support the most careful study and see if more can be done to find a solution.

I do not think we should ever play down our achievements in the arts. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central was a Cassandra—however Cassandra is defined and whoever Cassandra was. He was rather dismal and gloomy in what he said and I do not think that we should take such a despairing attitude; if we do, it will have a dampening effect on what the arts should achieve. We should build on our strengths and we should uphold the arts, which are largely a success story.

The arts are very important in this country, first and foremost for their intrinsic value, because what people perceive through their eyes and ears in the arts enriches and fulfils their lives and can excite and stimulate them and uplift their spirits. That is the most important thing.

Secondly, the arts have an undoubted economic value. Visitors come to Britain not for our weather but for our traditional scene, our heritage, our monarchy, our royal palaces, such as Hampton Court, our military bands, our cathedrals, our castles, our country houses, our villages and towns—many of which have great character—and our beautiful countryside, as well as our superb theatres and many of our concerts and other live arts performances. That is why visitors come to Britain; and when they do, they spend not only upon the arts and heritage, but upon hotels, restaurants, shopping and internal travel. Many of those activities are labour-intensive and the visitors, by their spending, generate employment and income and a tax yield to the Government.

It has been estimated by the tourist board that visitors from abroad produce in income about £8 billion a year. Anyone can work out as a piece of simple arithmetic that, in a population of 55 million, that amounts to something like £140 to £150 per head of population, or about £400 per household, per year. That is money in the big league; it is equivalent to not far short of half the cost of the national health service or 5p in the pound on income tax. It is very substantial, and we would be crazy not to go flat out not merely to hold it up, but to increase it still further.

I know from what my right hon. Friend said that he is very much seized of that, and I am glad that his Department, which he is welding together so successfully, covers tourism as well as the arts and heritage, because, from an economic point of view although not in every other sense, these things are linked. That showed not only in what he said today, but in his evidence to the Select Committee on National Heritage.

Business sponsorship is very important, and I am sorry that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central seemed to play it down. It is a hundredfold increase, from £500,000 per year in the late 1970s to £58 million a year now. When we compare that with the estimate of £80 million that the national lottery is expected to produce for the arts—or £80 million that it is expected to produce for the heritage—or the Arts Council budget which is of the order of £200 million, when it has found its level, we can see that it is in the same league.

Business sponsorship is very important and my right hon. Friend referred to the generous sponsorship of Allied

Lyons for the Royal Shakespeare Company of £3.3 million over three years and the £500,000 from British Telecom to the orchestras.

The one which makes me uneasy is tobacco sponsorship. The purpose of sponsorship is to improve the image of the sponsoring company, to promote goodwill and indirectly to promote the sale of its products.

In a typical constituency with 1,300 15-year-olds, according to the Royal College of Physicians, 24 per cent. of 15-year-olds now smoke and, if there is no change in the pattern, about one-third of them or 100 of the 1,300 will die from smoking or smoking-related diseases. I do not want the arts, about which I care passionately, to be abused to foster goodwill for a product which is lethal. I hope that the arts will take that view and will look harder for other sponsors, and that eventually people will spend less on tobacco and more on other things. I hope that producers of other products will in turn provide the sponsorship for the arts that is currently provided by the tobacco companies.

Many arts events are attended by doctors. It seems that they are often musical. They go to a lot of concerts. I believe that they could make their influence felt rather more if they pulled together. Perhaps they could get the BMA to organise them to do so.

I should like to mention two final matters in which I have an interest. I have three choral societies in my constituency: the Hampton choral society, of which I am president, the Twickenham choral society and the Teddington choral society. All over the country, choral societies perform their range of oratorios, requiems and masses at two or three concerts a year. They are a mainstream British musical tradition. I note that my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) is in his place. The three choirs festival, which highlights what I am saying, sprang up in his county in the 19th century; choral concerts now take place all over Britain. This is an important and a particularly English tradition.

In London these choral societies find it increasingly difficult to get funds, because they seek to obtain them from the Greater London Arts Association, which is dominated by politically correct people from inner London. Thus an ethnic body in central London can easily obtain arts funding whereas a choral society in outer London cannot. To some extent, that could threaten the societies' future.

I would ask the Under-Secretary to be kind enough to send for information on this point and, when he has had time to do so, to let me have a letter on how choral societies, not only in my own constituency and in greater London but all over the United Kingdom, can be upheld in the future.

My final point relates to our military heritage. Anyone who travels from Devonshire to Portsmouth can see HMS Victory in Portsmouth dockyard—and HMS Warrior. These are 19th century ships that have been preserved. However, if people in 100 years' time want to see a second world war ship—apart from HMS Belfast, which has been preserved on the River Thames, and one or two smaller ships—they will find it difficult to do so. Hitherto the preservation of such ships has been effected by a few philanthropists, including our former colleague Sir Philip Goodhart, who has preserved a submarine. It may become increasingly difficult to find a destroyer or a frigate because the only ones left will be those that have been sold to other countries.

I very much hope that the Secretary of State, who has already informed the Select Committee that he is seized of this matter, will give careful consideration to the funding of the preservation of warships, as part of Britain's military heritage. I am thinking not so much of the day-to-day revenue costs of keeping ships open as of the fact that they need major repairs from time to time to enable their hulls to survive. I hope that this activity can be funded by one part or another of the national lottery, so that the warships of the mid-20th century will be preserved for posterity. I should be grateful if the Government would give continuing consideration to that point, and if I could be told what they have in mind.

6.54 pm

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): I begin by apologising to the Under-Secretary of State, because I shall have to leave before he makes his response. Nevertheless, I assure him that on Monday morning I shall open my *Hansard* with trembling fingers and read every word that he utters this evening. I eagerly anticipate that.

The House will be relieved to know that I shall be mercifully brief this evening. It is always a great joy to follow the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel), who took us on a little tour through the beauties of his constituency. I should like to mention some of the beauties of mine.

We have, for instance, Featherstone Alps, perhaps better known as a pit top, but it looks pretty just after it has snowed. We also have eight pits that have been closed down in the past 18 months. We have empty factories and a great deal of unemployment. Yet I think it crucial to speak in this debate, because it is in times of poverty and near-despair that we need the arts more than ever—and we need them where we live.

I would not want to denigrate Lord Gowrie and the Arts Council. On the whole, I happen to think that the council does an admirable job. It is all too easy to carp, because we all believe that we could do the job better. But it is not the Arts Council's job to look at what is happening deep down in the regions.

One of the problems in the regions is the lack of money given to our local councils. They are certainly not the be-all and end-all for the arts in my part of Yorkshire. They do go in for healthy fights with other bodies, and so they should. Unless, however, they have the money to prompt and to assist, and to fight other interested bodies, the arts do not stand a chance.

I think particularly of the hatchet job that the Secretary of State for Education has done—we are consistently deprived by his actions. He has decreed that education authorities be given only an absolute minimum of central funds. The West Riding used to enjoy a fine musical tradition of orchestras, peripatetic music teachers and so on. That tradition was second to none. If people want to see a dramatic improvement in education standards, they have only to look at the difference between how music, art, the dance and drama were taught a mere 20 years ago and how vibrantly they are taught now.

All this is threatened by imposing on schools the responsibility to duplicate what used to be done by the grand county council of West Riding, which stretched from Dent all the way down to Hemsworth, Barnsley and beyond.

As a result of the change, the quality of artistic back-up, and of the help with starting projects that is so crucial to the

[Mr. Derek Enright]

arts, no longer exists. The Under-Secretary of State should take up his sword and fight the Department for Education. I applaud what he has done for team games; now I urge him to take on another educational policy which is extremely short-sighted.

We still have a strong tradition of male voice choirs; some of the best ones come from the old West Riding. The tradition of their excellence continues. This relies very heavily on the work of people involved in education. Nonetheless, it includes everyone, from the top people—the miners—right down to the doctors. They all sing together happily, and to some purpose. Indeed, they often come to the Albert hall to bring a little civilisation to this cruel and barbaric city.

The problems of brass band have been compounded. In this context, I must express gratitude to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State—this is beginning to sound like a love-in—for his work. I hope that the hon. Gentleman thoroughly enjoyed himself last Saturday, when huge crowds came from the north to the centre of this city and showed it how to behave. With all those people at Wembley, there was not a single arrest. That would not happen in Hayes and Harlington or any other such place.

Brass bands have a very serious problem which I have mentioned in the House previously. This arises from the closure of the pits. Frickley, which is in my constituency, was closed just at Christmas, and with it went the funds for the brass band. Those funds came not from the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation but from individual pits. Money was contributed by individual miners, and a certain amount came from the management.

This did not cover the entire costs, and it did not enable band members to live in luxury or to get off work. Members still went down the pit or went about their other jobs. However, funding was provided for youngsters participating in a village tradition. Those young people simply could not afford to buy such expensive instruments. Purchase was often on a shared basis.

It will be a very serious loss if, now that we have a grand arts Department, this kind of thing ceases. Apart from anything else, there is huge unemployment in my constituency. Youngsters leaving school cannot find work. I am thinking in particular of males. Boys do not have an opportunity to work with men who can show them how to behave and how to do a job.

In such a setting, a young lad stepping out of line was soon dealt with. Now boys are left on the streets. The kind of contact they need is available only through male voice choirs, brass bands and orchestras. Members of brass bands come together with string players to form orchestras, which have been very successful.

This is a fine heritage from the old West Riding, which was controlled, in turn, by Labour and Conservative councils, both of which contributed wholeheartedly to the tradition. The fact that the orchestras are rapidly dying out cannot possibly be blamed on the opting-out of schools, as no schools in the Wakefield area have opted out. The problem arises from the devolution of funding to schools.

I am arguing not that schools should not control their own funds but that the Government ought to recognise that there must be some central financial control if this function is to be properly discharged. It is just as important as the business of controlling truancy, for which central funds are necessary.

I should like to refer to the splendid sculpture park in Bretton, which is in the Wakefield district. If Ministers have not visited the park, I, in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe), invite them to do so. I shall be there this Saturday to see what is happening before we launch yet more Henry Moore statues.

Few sculpture parks can boast the Barbara Hepworths and the Henry Moores that we can boast. Both those people come from our area, and both were nurtured in the tradition and rigour of the West Riding. That is what informs their work. In Bretton, one can see sculptures in their proper setting. It is marvellous to behold families there on a good day. They take pictures and roam around the Henry Moore. These things are not sacred in that area; they are familiar.

Mr. Tony Banks: People can walk through it.

Mr. Enright: Indeed, or, as I witnessed not long ago, play hide-and-seek. It is important that such things should become a familiar part of people's lives.

In this area of excellence, there is currently serious underfunding. If I could get hold of the Arts Council, I would make the case that it should be a priority. I hope that the Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary will take a close look and see what can be done. The Wakefield council has gallantly set about funding the project. Now its continuation needs to be secured. I am quite sure that, in this regard, I shall have the wholehearted backing of the House and of the Department.

It is sad that a debate on the arts has to take place on an Adjournment motion. It is a great shame that such a discussion cannot be held in the middle of the week, when everything is throbbing and vibrant. However, the quality of the hon. Members present makes up for the lack of numbers.

7.6 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright). I agree with much of what he has said and, in particular, with his final remarks. We are all delighted to have this debate, but it is a scandal that the last one took place four years ago. It is equally scandalous that almost every time that we have an arts debate it is held in what could hardly be described as prime time. It is a great pity that, almost certainly, very little of what is said in the Chamber will be reported in the press tomorrow. While talking about the press, perhaps I should say that, although I entirely respect the desire of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State not to interfere, I hope that he will be able to encourage some of the so-called quality papers to carry a parliamentary page once again.

I was tempted to follow the hon. Member for Hemsworth and my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) by going on a scenic tour of my constituency. Sadly, I too can boast empty collieries. However, I can also boast fine historic houses, like Weston Park. I do not intend to take hon. Members on such a tour, but I should like to make a number of brief points.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) has returned to the Chamber. I regard the hon. Gentleman highly in many ways—as a

Staffordshire neighbour and colleague and as the son of a dear friend who had the good sense to sit on the Conservative side of the House. It is a pity that the hon. Gentleman, when he speaks in the House, has to sound so totally cross about everything. He is not like that in private life. He is very much nicer than he sounds in the Chamber. His diatribe this afternoon would have made one think that nothing was right, that all was wrong.

Mr. Fisher: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cormack: The hon. Gentleman did not give way to me, but I shall give way to him.

Mr. Fisher: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his courtesy. Far from being a diatribe against everything, what I said was a diatribe just against the Government's policy, or lack of it. I have nothing but praise for everything else in the world of the arts, whether at local government level or the work of Lord Gowrie. My speech was an attack on the Government and nothing else.

Mr. Cormack: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman's speech was not entirely worthy of him. One of the great features of the arts and our heritage is that many of us have struggled to keep them out of the party political arena. I am delighted to be chairman of the all-party committee on arts and heritage, which we founded in the mid-1970s and which has more paid-up members than any other all-party group in either House. We have successfully lobbied successive Governments.

Some of the achievements of the past 15 years include the national heritage memorial fund and the establishment of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission, which is now called English Heritage. In that time, too, we have seen the burgeoning of new arts galleries in London. I think of the Clore gallery at the Tate and the Sackler gallery at the Royal Academy. We have every right to be proud of all that has happened. By no means can all of it be the subject of praise for the Government.

I attended the opening of the Sainsbury wing at the national gallery and in a powerful speech Lord Sainsbury said—I hope that I can paraphrase him with reasonable accuracy—that although the family were delighted to be involved in that munificent gift to the nation—it was munificent—it was a pity that there was not more Government money for similar ventures. I echo that plea, just as I warmly endorse all the thanks that have rightly been bestowed upon the Sainsburys for what they gave to the national gallery.

Britain has incredible riches. The hon. Member for Hemsworth was slightly derogatory about the capital city but I am sure he did not mean it because in many ways London is the richest capital city in the world, although perhaps that is a subjective view. It has theatrical and musical traditions that are second to none and its museums and galleries are collectively the best in the world. We have an enormous amount to be proud of and it is our duty to ensure that when it is passed on to succeeding generations it will be even richer than it is now.

I am concerned about the fairly parlous structural state of some of our museums and galleries. My right hon. Friend, who is the most civilised man imaginable, made a passing reference to the Tate gallery. He was right about the Picasso exhibition but the Tate needs major structural repairs and it is important that they are effected. I hope that a prime task of the millennium fund will be to ensure that the structure of every major gallery and museum, not just in the capital city but in the country, is in a fit state to meet the 21st century.

Often we do not sufficiently appreciate what we have. The hon. Member for Hemsworth rightly spoke about people who have fallen upon hard times getting solace from the arts. Some of the most moving pictures that I have seen in the past two or three years have been those of the citizens of Sarajevo gathering for concerts. There was a marvellous event when Professor Nigel Osborne from Edinburgh sat in the middle of the devastated olympic arena and played a moving cello composition that he had written for the occasion. He played in white tie and tails surrounding by a crowd of people who had literally risked their lives to hear him. Older friends to whom I spoke about that said that it brought back memories of Myra Hess playing in the national gallery to the people of London in the last war.

The arts enrich and sustain. Anyone who had the chance to visit, as I did, one or two communist countries before the collapse of the Berlin wall will know what it meant for the people of those countries to be able to see good theatre, to listen to music and to get books. The arts have an overriding, enriching influence on our lives. As several hon. Members rightly said, the arts also bring money to this country. By jove they do, because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) said, people come here not for the weather but for our incomparably rich culture.

The letter from Lord Gowrie that has been quoted in the debate should be quoted again. It states:

> "Our enviable level of arts activity, with all that implies for employment, foreign exchange and national interests in general, cannot be sustained against this background."

The background that he mentions is the parlous state of public funding. I pay tribute to the Secretary of State for what he has done and for what he as a man stands for. There could be no more fitting holder of his office, and I am glad that he is supported and assisted by an Under-Secretary of State who adopts a robust approach to these matters.

However, we need more funding. I remember attending a conference organised by the Conservative party in 1979, shortly before our general election victory 15 years ago. My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham was there and probably remembers it too. Lord St. John of Fawsley, as he now is, was the moving spirit behind it and the Baroness Thatcher of Finchley, as she now is, made a passionate speech about the arts and money and castigated candle-end economies. She said that in the arts a little money goes a long way and that the savings which accrue when the arts budget is cut are minuscule in the context of the national budget. Those words are as true today as they were when she uttered them 15 or more years ago. Therefore, I hope that in the next round of public spending my right hon. Friend, supported by hon. Members from all parts of the House, will fight his corner as he has never fought it before. I make no criticism of his commitment, dedication and knowledge, which is considerable, but we must fight to preserve or increase the arts budget because it is a tiny sum.

Mr. Tony Banks: I was the one who raised the issue of the suitability of the noble Earl Gowrie as chairman of the Arts Council. I spoke not against him as an individual but because he is an ex-Conservative Minister. I know the way that these things go. Another reason for Lord Gowrie

[Mr. Tony Banks]

perhaps not being an ideal choice is that his letter mentions cuts in the arts. The hon. Gentleman said that the Baroness Thatcher spoke about candle-end savings, but many people in the arts have to survive on virtually nothing. I remember Lord Gowrie quitting as Arts Minister because he said he could not live on a salary that at that time was £33,000. That is a strange message to send to artists who live on a mere pittance.

Mr. Cormack: I cannot quite see the aim of that intervention other than to get something off the hon. Gentleman's chest. His jocularity shows that it was totally irrelevant and I do not intend to be led astray. However, I will say that gamekeepers often prove to be the best poachers and vice versa. Lord Gowrie will fight robustly for the arts and will be an admirable chairman. He is immensely civilised, has a great knowledge of the arts, and is skilful with his pen as well as on his feet. He will prove to be a doughty champion. The Arts Council will be well led by him and will have my complete support.

I understand the reasons for some of the doubts expressed by a former arts Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton), but there is a need for an Arts Council. There is a case for all the great nationals to be funded directly as are the great museums and galleries, but I certainly think that there is a continuing role for a robust Arts Council, and I believe that it will be under Lord Gowrie.

I have talked about the Tate and the parlous state of its fabric. We should recognise that our museums suffer not just from leaking roofs but from their frozen purchase grants. Although the national heritage memorial fund does a wonderful job, it is deeply disturbing to me that so many of the important objects, for which the Export Review Committee refuses to give an export licence, eventually go abroad. I am not one of those who would fight to the last to keep every object in this country, as that would be entirely ridiculous, but nevertheless it is disturbing how many of the things that are of great national significance have gone abroad. The prime reason for them going is the level of purchase grant that our museums and galleries have. There is great unease and real concern among trustees—all those whom I know—and the directors on that score. That must be addressed with vigour.

I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State might well say that the lottery will be able to help. As one of those who fought for the lottery, I am delighted about that and welcome the new money but, as has been said on a number of occasions, it is no substitute for Government and national responsibility. It is vital that it should be additional money against an increasing national budget, not against a frozen or decreasing one. That is important and I would welcome assurances from my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary when he replies. I know that he shares my concern about the wonderful museums that we have throughout the country and I look forward to hearing what he has to say.

I have a particular interest in, and concern for, another group of buildings—our historic churches. In so many of our towns and cities, the only building of real historic interest and significance is the church. I speak as church warden of a small village church. The village has a relatively tiny population—under 300 people—and we are raising £100,000 to repair our church. Although we have the aid of a grant from English Heritage, for which we are extremely grateful, we shall have to raise the bulk of the money ourselves. If we have a similar problem in five or six years time, it will be beyond the resources of such a small area to raise a similar sum again. That tale could be repeated time and again up and down the country.

I declare an interest as a trustee of the Historic Churches Preservation Trust, which, every year, gives away some £500,000. We are climbing a mountain that is getting bigger by the year. One of the problems is the vexed question of VAT on repairs to listed buildings. I hope that my right hon. Friend, who is a former Treasury Minister and, in that capacity, received me with trustees on that subject some years ago, will talk to the Chancellor and other Treasury colleagues about it. That problem will not go away; indeed, given the increasingly parlous state of the Church of England's finances, it will grow bigger year by year. Any nation that allowed some of its fine historic churches and cathedrals to be put in jeopardy could not call itself civilised.

Only today, incidentally, I received a letter from our former colleague, Sir Hugh Rossi, who heads up the new Historic Chapels Trust. Again—I am not just concerned about the buildings of the established church—there is a real problem. I welcome the new trust and I am sure that Sir Hugh will give it dedicated and splendid leadership, but it does not have funds and resources. He is looking for ways and means of raising the finance to sustain those religious buildings that are no longer used, but that are an important part of the life and history of the country.

In many of the mining towns of Wales, Yorkshire, and even parts of my native Staffordshire, the chapel played a central part, but now, in many cases, a handful of people go, or none at all, and it is redundant. Far too many of those buildings have been turned into furniture repositories, office machinery sales rooms and all sorts of wholly unsuitable uses. It is excellent that Sir Hugh's trust exists to try to preserve redundant chapels but it needs money.

That brings me to the point that I made earlier—the sums that we are talking of are very small. They are tiny in the national budget. My right hon. Friend's Department has, in comparison with other Government Departments, a very small budget. I am not a prodigal spender, and I do not advocate open-ended commitments and blank cheques, but there is a national responsibility. I welcome the establishment of the National Heritage Department, but it is sad that this is the first debate on the arts since it was established. I was one of those who argued for its creation 20 years ago and constantly made reference to the need for uniting arts and heritage under a Cabinet Minister, so of course I am glad that it is there, but if it is to fulfil its potential, it needs a proper budget to meet all of its responsibilities. At the moment, it does not have that, and we should all do everything that we can to try to ensure that it gets greater resources.

We are dealing with one of the most important subjects that Parliament can debate, because, in a few years' time, amid the furore of a Tuesday and Thursday, the particular issues that might have excited passions today on many other fronts will be forgotten. If our civilisation is to survive, it is important that the buildings that encapsulate it and the works of art that speak of our heritage and history are preserved. It is now the responsibility of the National Heritage Department to do that. I am sure that there is not a single hon. Member in the House who would not wish my right hon. and hon. Friends success in their tremendous

task, but we need to give higher priority to the subjects that we are debating today, in financial terms as well as parliamentary time.

7.27 pm

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): After the last few words of my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) I feel almost like breaking out and singing Rule Britannia or perhaps even the national anthem, so deeply do I feel about such matters. This is a club: it is the "we all love the arts" club—the luvvies' club—and I am not a member. I am on the outside—a Philistine. Indeed, if you, Madam Deputy Speaker, will excuse the ethnic expression, if it were down to the unanimity of many hon. Members, I would be blackballed. I am delighted about that, because it is not the sort of club that I want to belong to.

I have heard a couple of things that interest me. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) talked about bringing the arts to prison. The mind boggles. Imagine the Krays dressed up in tights and prancing around—that sounds rather good—or Ronnie Knight singing like an opera singer instead of like a bird? Perhaps we should bring in the Trojan horse for those on the other side—they might be able to use it for other purposes.

In the Whips Office there is a Conservative research department brief on the arts. Under the heading "The Governments's Approach" it says:

"The central aim of Conservative arts policy has always been to encourage wider access to, and higher standards in, the arts. This aim applies at every level of artistic activity, from amateur dramatics to Grand Opera."

That is very good, very narrow, very exclusive and very elitist, is it not? There is no mention of anything but amateur dramatics in the arts. Why not darts? That is a game played in most working men's clubs throughout the world and in this country, particularly in the north-east and north-west, but there is no mention of improving the standard of darts playing. Ten-pin bowling is one of the most enjoyed leisure pursuits. Those who play have to pay the full cost of using the bowling lanes, but there is no mention of the Government becoming involved in improving standards there. The same is true of tiddlywinks. Table tennis is probably played by more people in this country than any other sport, but there is no mention of that. What always angers me about arts debates is that they are too damned elitist and closed shop.

There is no reference to the sports that I mentioned because they are not Establishment sports or pursuits—although given the decimation of the arts world in America and here due to a particular kind of illness, one wonders what the arts world gets up to in respect of some leisure pursuits. Our heritage is what the Establishment says it is. Time and again, I have asked for somebody to tell me in simple words—because I am a simple chap—what is so special about the arts and what is so ordinary about working-class pastimes.

I refer, for example, to the sport of my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe). Watching him dashing for the tape in the Olympics, either just behind or just ahead of Steve Ovett—the sheer form of that man running for his country—was to witness an artistic form. It was something special and really nice. Compare that with the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South about looking at churches, which would bore me to tears. Once, I visited Athens. It seemed like a Wimpey building site and I was absolutely bored. However, that is my view. If somebody else thinks that old broken brick is marvellous, that is up to them—but do not expect me to accept your view of what is special. In the same way, I do not expect you to accept my view of my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The hon. Gentleman should not bring me into it. He probably did not intend to.

Mr. Dicks: I beg your pardon, Madam Deputy Speaker. We must be more generous and take a more general view of leisure pursuits. Take Pavarotti. Nowadays, he has to be helped on to the stage and leans against a backdrop. He has to be supported by other singers in case he falls over. He holds a handkerchief that is soaking wet, and he weighs 25 stone. His voice is going now. How on earth can he be seen to be singing a love song to a supposedly young lady but in reality to a woman of the same age and nearly the same weight who rocks and rolls every time she stands up? If others want to say that watching such a performance is their pastime and heritage, let them do so, but they should pay the full cost and not expect me, my constituents or anyone else to put our hands in our pockets to the tune of nearly £40 a seat to support them. If they are daft enough to follow that pursuit, let them be daft enough to pay for it.

For my sins, I have supported Bristol Rovers for 50 years. They are now struggling in the second division of the Endsleigh league. They are not doing well and are almost broke. When I attend their matches, and if I am not invited to the chairman's box, which is just a little wooden structure—nothing like the luxury box in which the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) sits when he goes to Chelsea—

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Gentleman amuses me, but he is not getting away with that calumny. I am a Chelsea season ticket holder and I have been a regular supporter for 40 years. I queue for my ticket, sit in the stands, and pay for my seat—which is more than I can say for some Members of Parliament.

Mr. Dicks: I will take a guess that the hon. Gentleman has a cup final ticket, which many Chelsea supporters do not—and I bet that he did not have to queue for it. However, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees that those of us who support soccer and appreciate its beauty—and the artistry of Manchester United, Newcastle and Blackburn Rovers in particular—pay the full economic cost of entering the grounds. Nobody says, "The cost of a stand seat is £60, but we will give you £40 towards it because it is important in the wider context of the heritage of our country." I suppose I should go down on one knee when I say that.

Football is our heritage. It was founded in this country, but nobody seems to care whether Hartlepool United goes out of existence, because the luvvies do not watch Hartlepool United but go in their droves to watch opera and ballet, kiss each other on both cheeks and say, "Darling, how nice to see you." That is why poor Hartlepool United and, to a lesser extent, Bristol Rovers have to struggle to make ends meet, week in and week out. I get fed up with it, I am sick and tired of it, and I hope that one day some common sense will be shown by members of my Front Bench and that something will be done.

[Mr. Dicks]

The Conservative research department brief also states that the west end theatre is a success and that

"11.5 million people attended shows at West End theatres in 1993-94."

However, it does not reveal that the most successful shows are those where supply and demand come together—as in the case of Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber's musicals—and make a price. The public are prepared to pay the full cost to see a damned good show. They are prepared to queue for tickets, or even to wait three or four months for them. In the arty-farty world, where it is a case of an obscure opera staged in the back of beyond, it is said, "It will go out of business unless we give it money." Of course it will go out of business if it is a load of rubbish and nobody wants to see it unless someone else pays for the ticket. That is the problem with the arts: so much rubbish is put on that nobody wants to see unless someone else makes a contribution.

I mentioned Manchester United and Arsenal. People pay the full cost to see them. The hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) mentioned the wonderful game that Wigan played against Leeds last Saturday. Everyone involved paid their own way. There was no subsidy of the kind given to transporting musical instruments. Players and fans paid the cost of their own journeys. They went to Wembley, where it cost them a fortune not only to watch the game but to pay for the barrels of beer afterwards—and good luck to them. There is no subsidy for those working-class lads up north who—unlike a load of middle class twits swanning around in their bow ties and long frocks—support their team and pay their own way out of their hard-earned wages. They paid the full cost, and quite right. We are all very proud of them.

The Conservative research document also makes reference to an access initiative,

"aimed at encouraging a wider range of people to participate in the arts, and at"—

this is the best bit—

"improving (or deepening) the quality of their experience of the arts."

Will my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State share with me—to use the "in" phrase—what is meant by deepening the quality of experience of the arts? That is politically correct tripe of the worst kind. Nobody wants to improve or deepen the quality of my experience of Bristol Rovers, but now we are to have a chap with a little hat and a badge saying, "I can deepen your understanding of the arts—let me talk to you and help you to understand the arts." I have never read so much tripe. If that is the sort of rubbish coming out of central office, God help us.

The briefing also states that

"Conservatives have provided record resources for the Arts Council. Between 1979 and 1993, the Arts Council's grant increased by 45 per cent.—over and above inflation."

What a boast. What a record. Some of my constituents have a job to survive, yet we boast of giving the Arts Council increases "over and above inflation." What sort of society does that? Value added tax has been imposed on domestic fuel because of the need to overcome the Government's debts or the country's debts, yet we can fire off money to arty-farty people and the luvvies. The poor, the sick and the elderly would be offended if they ever bothered to read that. They would ask, "Why do we have to struggle?" Am I to tell them, "If you cannot heat your flat tonight, I will put you in a car and take you to the Royal Opera house, and the Government will give you £40 to get in—and that will keep you warm as well." That is the logic of this nonsense. How can we talk of making savings to get Government finances right when that sort money is sent down the plughole? It is a disgrace and a shame and I hope that common sense will take hold one day and that some of us will have a chance to put things right.

The briefing adds that although the Arts Council grant will fall in 1994-95 it will still stand at £186 million, which will still be

"£800,000 more than was originally planned in the 1992 autumn statement."

The luvvies will not like that. They will say that it is not enough. On the other hand, an extra £1.6 million will be provided in 1995-96—again, more money wasted.

I did not vote for the national lottery because 20 per cent. of the funds raised will go to the same gang of vested interests who seem able to bend the ear, neck and both legs of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. It is estimated that that 20 per cent. will be worth £75 million. I say to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State: give me that £75 million and I will make the life of some of my constituents a lot better. I could ensure that life was a bit easier for the many old age pensioners who have to live in those dreadful flats in Lambeth and who have to bar themselves in at night because they are unsafe. I would arrange a holiday for them—a cruise—instead of giving money to the plonkers in the arts world. Words fail me.

I have a new definition of the arm's-length principle. The arts world in general, and the luvvies in particular, should be at arm's length from taxpayers' pockets. Their grubby hands should be kept as far away as possible from taxpayers' pockets.

If the European Parliament can have Eurosceptic members, why cannot the Arts Council have "arts-sceptic" members? I am available when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State wants someone on the council to pull it apart and close it down or to close down his Department, which is costing the taxpayer £1 million.

7.40 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I am still trying to absorb the fusillade of the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks). I did not expect him to finish so quickly, but I am glad that he did.

I offer my apologies. Like other hon. Members, I have tried to keep in touch with the debate, but I have treated it somewhat like a buffet—dipping in and out while electioneering elsewhere.

I register my support for the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), who, like others, complained that this important debate on the arts is being held today. We all know why that is so. If elections are going on in which we have a great interest—why should not we have an interest as politicians of sorts?—the House should rise for a day. We should get away from this nonsense. The last arts debate took place four years ago on the day of the European elections. No doubt the Government's business managers will be thinking of some other subject for 9 June.

Mr. Cormack: We are not here on 9 June.

Mr. Banks: Good. In that case, the Government will not have to think of a subject.

I am not criticising the Secretary of State—no doubt he takes the opportunity that he is given—but such

arrangements convince me that the Government use arts debates such as this as a throwaway, a chuckaway and a sort of filling. The hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington made a number of points that are worth dealing with, and it would be worth doing so at a time when the House could consider them properly, without its mind being fixed somewhere else or hon. Members hoping to get away as quickly as possible to do a bit of last-minute fanatical canvassing—not that we need to do so in the London borough of Newham, but I understand why Conservative Members might be panicking tonight.

I always know that the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington will attend the arts debate, as he knows that I will. He certainly could not be described as a luvvy. There is nothing luvvy about him. He is a sort of artistic anti-Christ who comes into our Chamber. He made a number of arguments, however, that we need to deal with. One thinks of Andy Warhol's dictum that everyone is famous for 15 minutes. It seems a pity that the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington always chooses his quarter of a hour in an arts debate. One has the image at times that he would probably be happiest if he were out vandalising a Van Gogh, burning a book or bombing a ballet, but the question that he asked—what is art?—is an important one. Even the ramblings of a lunatic—I am not suggesting that the hon. Gentleman is a lunatic—contain the odd gem.

We addressed that question when the Labour party controlled the Greater London council. I was fortunate to be chairman of the arts committee and I looked at which organisations were receiving the money. I found that the money was going to the great institutions: the national theatre, English national opera, London Festival ballet and London orchestral concerts. I did not argue with that, but I wondered where the rest of the money was going. Why was not it going to regional organisations, community arts, ethnic arts or working-class activities, a description that the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington might prefer? Middle-class people, particularly white middle-class people, were determining what was art. They decided that art was what they liked most. The hon. Gentleman is right to touch on that subject. Often, one found that those people went to opera not because they appreciated the music but because it was a good place to be seen. It makes me want to throw up a bit when I go to an artistic event and see people posing because it is a good place to be seen. I have some sympathy with the hon. Gentleman because some of the people who attend such events could easily pay a much higher price for their tickets. Why should people in the London borough of Newham subsidise the arts for them?

I want to make opera, ballet and wonderful concert music available to the people of Newham. Subsidies are not targeted, as they should be, to expand audiences for those great art forms; they are targeted at a narrow group of people who have the fortune and economic ability to enjoy those art forms.

One must consider other factors when considering arts funding. In the GLC days, we said that we should not dismiss transport. If there is no public transport or scant public transport by the time concerts, opera and theatre performances finish, ordinary people who do not have cars will not be able to get home. That is another in-built disadvantage that they face and another in-built advantage that those with a higher economic mobility have in enjoying the arts. We must consider the arts in their totality.

The hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington is right to point out that one needs to consider carefully who is defining what art is, because when that has been defined public money and investment can be directed to it. I am not arguing against such investment being made—this is where I part company with the hon. Gentleman—but we should ensure that those who could benefit most from investment in the arts do so and that those who could afford to pay somewhat more do so too.

I listened to the hon. Gentleman's speech, but it would be almost beyond anyone to deepen the appreciation of Bristol City—

Mr. Dicks: Rovers.

Mr. Banks: Or, indeed, Bristol Rovers. That would probably be even more challenging than deepening an appreciation of Bristol City.

The hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) spoke of the economic advantages of the arts. He has left the Chamber. I will forgive him doing that, but I could forgive him almost anything having sat at a concert in Smith square and having heard him play Mozart. It is fantastic to have such ability and talent, which I did not associate with the hon. Member for Twickenham. Given the way in which he jerks around all over the place, I thought it would be impossible for him to play Mozart, but he did so—and to concert-performance standards. I found that it was a wonderful experience and I am deeply grateful to him for it. I could forgive him anything because of that ability to enrich my life and the lives of others through that beautiful music. He is a talented guy in artistic, if not political, terms.

One should consider some of the arguments that the hon. Member for Twickenham advanced on the economic contribution of the arts. I should have thought that this was something that monetarists could grasp. Although we go over the statistics from time to time, they do not seem to sink in with the Government in the way that they should. London is the region about which I am most concerned. Some 11,700 organisations in the capital are involved in arts, culture and entertainment. They employ more than 200,000 people, which is equal to London's construction industry during the boom and to 6 per cent. of total employment. The hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington should think about those facts. A number of people from Hayes and Harlington may be employed in the arts industry —not just those who perform, but those who provide the background services, carpenters, scene painters and those who move the sets around. Thousands of people are associated with the arts. They do skilled and unskilled work. There are those who provide the food and so on.

So the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington must think a little beyond the "arty-farty" group, as he describes it, and realise that involved in and supporting the arts are many thousands of Londoners who work hard, not necessarily for large amounts of money, and contribute greatly to the economy of the capital city.

It is estimated that 40 per cent. of all artists in the United Kingdom are based in London. The estimated turnover attributed to all that activity has been put at £7,465 million. That is almost 6 per cent. of our gross domestic product. Public subsidy amounted to no more than £500 million of that. I assume that that is taking central Government and local government investment together. That is a wonderful return. I say that to the hon. Member for Hayes and

[Mr. Banks]

Harlington because he is the main, or indeed the only, sceptic here. Such arguments are worth bearing in mind, but he never touches on them during his 15-minute rants in our rare arts debates.

Overseas earnings from the arts were estimated at £3,800 million, against imports of £2,500 million, giving a net balance of £1,300 million to the economy of the capital and the nation. That is a significant economic contribution. The hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington dismissed the people involved in the arts as luvvies. I have some sympathy with him about some of the people involved in the arts. However, when one examines the people who enjoy the arts, one realises how significant the figures are.

It has been estimated that in 1990 there were 94 million attendances at cultural events, 27 million at the cinema, 21 million at museums and galleries, 17.5 million at clubs and smaller music venues, 12 million at theatre, opera and dance, 11.6 million at historic houses and 4 million at concerts.

I am an avid soccer supporter so I can perhaps say this to the hon. Gentleman more easily than anyone. Those figures are a hell of a lot higher than the figures for those who go to support football, although I take what he said about the fact that football and football supporters often get a rum deal.

Mr. Dicks: I do not disagree with anything that the hon. Gentleman says. All that I am asking is why people want to attend arts events only if part of the cost is paid by someone else. If the hon. Gentleman went to Arsenal, he would have to pay the full cost. I cannot understand why one aspect of life receives a subsidy. I accept the figures that the hon. Gentleman has given, but I do not understand why the arts should expect to be subsidised by the rest of us.

Mr. Banks: I am a Chelsea supporter. I would rather die than go to Arsenal.

The reason why the arts expect to be subsidised is that there is a good return on the investment. We invest in education and we invest in the arts. The hon. Gentleman seems to have picked out one area of public investment. I do not like the word "subsidy" for the arts. I think that we subsidise defence, but we invest in the arts and in education. We invest in people's creativity—their manual and their mental creativity. That is a perfectly reasonable thing to do.

The hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington should come to the Theatre Royal in my constituency in the London borough of Newham. It is heavily subsidised by the Arts Council, the London arts board and the local authority. It is difficult for us to do that. We have kept seat prices as low as possible because the theatre is in an area of economic deprivation. The hon. Gentleman should come to the theatre and see the pensioners and unemployed people who come and enjoy performances. He tends to confine his criticisms—as I do at times—to something like the Royal Opera house. If he came to the Theatre Royal at Stratford, he might see the type of people whom he would be happy with in Newham or Hayes and Harlington enjoying theatre and receiving the benefit of a seat subsidy. The subsidy costs us dear in the London borough of Newham because we are a hard-stretched local authority.

I should like to deal with local authority support for the arts. The Secretary of State praised local authorities and said what an excellent job they were doing. I wonder how much he appreciates how difficult it is for those local authorities to maintain that level of funding for the arts. During National Heritage questions I often ask—not recently, because I seem to be unlucky in getting into the frame and being called—how many times the Secretary of State has talked not to the Treasury but to the Department of the Environment about the arts provision that local authorities make.

Arts provision is one of the discretionary areas of local government expenditure. If hard-pressed locally elected councils face cuts in statutory areas of expenditure, it is not surprising that they chop away at the discretionary areas. I feel deeply annoyed that Newham and Waltham Forest —two Labour authorities—but mostly Newham, work hard to keep the Theatre Royal open while just down the road in Liberal Democrat Tower Hamlets the council has closed down the Half Moon theatre. It is easy for local authorities to talk about how they show up in terms of overall expenditure. If they shut out discretionary areas of expenditure, they can save money for people in their area, but those people simply move into areas such as Newham. They can use the facilities that the Newham charge payers have to keep going. That is parasitic. That is what is happening in London local authorities.

Newham tries to keep open its recreational facilities such as swimming pools and leisure centres. Other Tory and Liberal authorities close them down. People who live in Tory or Liberal areas cannot be prevented from coming to Newham. It is grotesquely unfair. It is made even worse if Ministers start slagging off my authority for being a high spender. We subsidise people around us in the arts, leisure and recreational facilities and we deeply resent it.

Mr. Brooke: I take the point that the hon. Gentleman raises. It is one that we have discussed with some of the great city authorities in the context of their regional hinterland. Does the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that it is possible for the process that he describes to work in the opposite direction—that Camden council tax payers can use Westminster facilities and that Westminster maintains a music library on behalf of the whole country?

Mr. Banks: Of course I acknowledge that. I was talking about the east end of London. In the spirit of friendship on this rare occasion, I will concede that point to the right hon. Gentleman. But I suggest that he examines the problem. We are talking about discretionary areas of local authority expenditure. Clearly, something has to be done. There must be some acknowledgement that when the Department of the Environment makes its standard spending assessments it looks at what services are provided, not what services are needed in discretionary areas. That is a matter that he could usefully discuss with his colleagues in other Departments.

It is true that in the past two years cultural provision has been seriously affected by the reduction in local authority expenditure on the arts in London. The further reduction of standard spending assessment allowances for London for 1994-95 will exacerbate the position. SSA settlements have seriously affected some of London's poorest boroughs, including my own of Newham, neighbouring Hackney, Haringey, Islington and so on. All those boroughs are associated with strong support for the arts.

I acknowledge that the City of London has increased its expenditure on the arts. That is good, but the City is in the unique position of being far and away the wealthiest local authority in the country.

It worries me that there is still so much uncertainty about arts expenditure. The cuts that the Department of National Heritage has announced for the next four years are worrying. We reached a good position when we had a rolling programme and some predictability about arts funding—not about cuts but about an increase. One must pay tribute to the right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) for achieving that. Many people said that, for a Tory, he would have made a good Arts Minister. That was until he took the hands-on artistic policy rather too literally. That greater certainty about money for the arts was what was most needed.

I understand that a decision is due any day about the lottery. I am an agnostic on lotteries. I would also like to be seriously rich, so I shall undoubtedly buy some tickets when they come my way. If I win, you will not see my bottom for dust, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I agree with what the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) and others have said—the money generated by the lottery must be new money for the arts or whatever. Perhaps I am a cynic or suspicious, but I do not think that that will happen, because, when Treasury Ministers make their assessments, they will take into account the global amount of money available.

The Secretary of State, or whichever Conservative—or Labour—Member has the job, will find it difficult to argue that the Treasury should simply dismiss that money and not take it into account when deciding the arts settlement. It is all right to give an undertaking in the House and to set out with good intentions, but I can well imagine the sort of pressures a Secretary of State will be under when faced with that spending round. The Treasury will say, "But hell, you're getting an awful lot of money from the national lottery."

I should like a guarantee from the Secretary of State that Mr. Branson will not get responsibility for running the lottery. My suspicions about Mr. Branson are very deep. I feel that he injected £5 million into the county hall leisure complex recently to bail out the Japanese group Shiryama, which was due to hit the wall. I remain firmly convinced of that. His involvement might have saved the group's bacon and in doing so he has also saved the face of Ministers. If county hall—immediately opposite the Palace of Westminster—had ended up the sort of shell that Battersea power station is, imagine Ministers' embarrassment.

Am I being basely and groundlessly suspicious or could Mr. Branson have been given a nod and a wink that if he stepped in to bail out the county hall project he would get the lottery? I hope that that is not the case, but I shall be watching closely who gets the lottery and I hope that it is not Mr. Branson, or all my suspicions will be proved correct.

I also have a query on the funding for the London and regional orchestras as a result of the £3.2 million cut in grant aid to the Arts Council. I declare an interest as I am the parliamentary adviser to the Musicians Union—something that I thoroughly enjoy. Apart from the London symphony orchestra, London orchestras get a very rough deal and have additionally had to contend with the effects of the Hoffman review, which has caused additional expenditure. They must provide necessary documentation, while sponsorship and future work prospects were blighted by six months' uncertainty over their future.

Dennis Scard, the general secretary of the union, has written to the Secretary of State and I have seen the right hon. Gentleman's reply. He uses the arm's-length principle to wipe his hands of any decision making, which is wrong. That is why I tend to agree with one of his predecessors—it is not good enough for Ministers to use that principle to avoid Government responsibility.

The fact that we cannot sustain our existing orchestras in London is a matter for national shame. Other capital cities manage to do so and it is a cause of enormous shame to all of us that we have not been able to do so in London.

Finally—you will be delighted to hear, Mr. Deputy Speaker—I must return to the discretionary area of local authority spending. Some of my constituents—young unemployed kids, who happen to be black—have come to me because they have tried to get grants from the local authority for dance and drama training, but have got nowhere. Perhaps there is a reason. I do not want to be patronising, but some of our unemployed youth could find a way out of the ghetto through the arts. It is a way out and we have many ghettos—economic, intellectual and cultural—in our country today.

One in six local authorities has a policy of awarding no discretionary grants. The percentage offering full grants for dance and drama has fallen from 83 per cent. in 1987 to 44 per cent. in 1992. About 40 per cent. of dance and drama students are unable to take up the places that they have been offered, which is equivalent to 280 drama students and 590 dance students.

Most dance and drama schools are entirely funded by fees from students and there is a significant shortfall—at present £3,000 per year—between the mandatory grant and the full cost charged by the school. The Government really should decide to make that area of discretion mandatory because so much talent is being wasted. Those kids have no chance of taking advantage of drama and dance courses because they cannot afford them. They come from unemployed families and impoverished backgrounds and they are dealing with local authorities whose discretionary decision making and funding are tightly squeezed, as I explained. The Government must look into the matter and I plead with the Secretary of State to consider it carefully.

Mr. Brooke: As was said, that matter concerns my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education. My question arises from the speech by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). Would the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Banks) impose qualitative tests to assess the ability of those kids or is he trying to make the grant an automatic privilege?

Mr. Banks: I would like to think about that, but, having done so, I think that there would have to be some sort of qualification. One does not just walk into a university. One has to have qualifications that demonstrate certain academic achievements. One would need evidence that a person would benefit, so that would have to be the case.

What worries me is the fact that I have been advised that some incredibly talented kids have not got grants. Advisers have told me, "They've got it. They could make it." Unfortunately, they cannot give them the grant because they have not got the money. That problem was the subject of a BBC television programme on one of my constituents

[Mr. Banks]

recently. He has enormous talent. I suppose that, because of that fact, he might find a way out and become well known anyway, but kids with lesser talents are being deprived and it seems a waste of ability. I do not like seeing ability wasted.

Mr. Fisher *rose—*

Mr. Banks: Yes, there should be some demonstration of ability, but I shall give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Mr. Fisher) who will undoubtedly have the responsibility for making such a decision in the not-too-distant future.

Mr. Fisher: May I suggest to my hon. Friend that he should support the approach that would accredit a small number of schools—perhaps 10 dance schools and 10 drama schools. Any students accepted to their courses would automatically get a mandatory full grant and accreditation would be the quality control that he is after. That system would ensure that the most talented students got the grants that their talent entitled them to and it would end the system whereby only people with rich parents or those lucky enough to live in certain local authorities went to such schools.

Mr. Banks: That was straight from the horse's mouth. Exactly. That is how we are going to do it. I like the bold and decisive way in which my hon. Friend moved to the Dispatch Box to announce the policy and I look forward to sitting behind him on the Government side of the House in a few months' time and to seeing him announce that policy. What an excellent fellow he is.

The hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington has obviously gone off to vandalise that Van Gogh. Why the arts? Because the merits and worth of an age will not be judged by the efficiency with which it can kill people with bombs, bullets and bayonets. It will be judged by future generations on the quality of its architecture, literature, painting, poetry and musicians, such as the hon. Member for Twickenham who has just returned to his place. That is how we will be judged and that is the reason why we should be investing in the arts and why we should stand up and proudly declare so and not be bullied by the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington and the arts thugs he represent. I am glad to say that there are not many of them.

8.8 pm

Mr. Michael Spicer (Worcestershire, South): In view of what I want to say, I must declare an interest as a humble painter, who occasionally sells paintings, and, more particularly, as someone who writes the odd novel, for which I am the recipient of benefits from the public lending rights arrangement.

Like the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), I agree that my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) raised an important matter when, perhaps for the first time in this debate, he questioned what art is and what it is for. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West was right to consider that.

I suppose that a possible definition of art is that it is a physical manifestation of the individual human spirit, which throughout history has invariably acted against the oppression of the state. To that extent, therefore, the arts and state interference are in many respects antithetical. When, in history, the state has acted as patron of the arts, that is, it has supplied money to artists, it has done so most successfully at the behest not of councils, committees, quangos, royal commissions or even local authorities, but of individuals. The great Medicis, the best of the Doges, Louis XIV and even Prince Albert were, in different ways, artists themselves. They had their own eccentricities and, through their patronage, they expressed their spirit and sense of excellence. Their motivation may have been personal glorification or even the search for short-term popularity, but in their cases the nature of the relationship between the patron and the artist, even when that patron was using public moneys, was one to one. Pork barrel politics and compromises between extraneous sectional interests were minimal.

I hope that Lord Gowrie will display the individualism of a modern Doge, but, more probably, he will be constrained, as his predecessors were, by the paraphernalia of modern statecraft. When state committees, quangos and local authorities interfere, as they invariably do in the modern world, and manage state funds, not only is special pleading of the essence, but so is compromise between interests that have nothing to do with the arts, such as arise out of the regional distribution of moneys and the donation of moneys to sectional interests.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred, for example, to ethnic art. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West offered a new set of criteria for the distribution of moneys, ranging from employment to exports and, I believe I heard him say, the rate of return on capital. The latter criterion was surprising coming from him. Such criteria may be admirable, but, intrinsically, they have nothing to do with the arts. They have more to do with political correctness, to use the words of the heir to the throne.

In such cases, the patronage of the arts becomes, frankly, an extension of social and economic policy and it has little to do with the pursuit of excellence in art. Worse still is when such patronage becomes an overt instrument of state propaganda. That was certainly the case in Nazi Germany and it is the case with the European cultural fund, which is currently running at 70 million ecu or about £50 million—it has increased by almost 50 per cent. in the past two years.

The aim of that fund has nothing to do with the expression of individual spirit, but everything to do with the pursuit of European federalism. A classic recent example of the misuse of those public funds was the financially disastrous sponsorship of the Euro-soap "Riviera", which has proved to be the most expensive and least popular programme of its kind. It was not, luckily, shown in this country. The ratio of money invested to the number of people who watched the programme—to use the return on capital argument of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West—was the highest in the history of television.

Another example of the misuse of that so-called cultural fund was the 10 million ecu given towards the Barcelona Olympic games. That funding had absolutely nothing to do with sponsorship of the arts and everything to do with pursuit of a political ideal.

There are, of course, exceptions to the general rule that the arts and artists are best left alone. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) said, it was only when the French impressionists were left alone that they expressed their human spirit

effectively. The same was true of the expressionists. That expression was, invariably, directed against the establishment of the day, which, quite probably, was much the same as the will of the state committees and quangos of the day.

The first important exception to the general rule is when intervention is directed towards the preservation and protection of a cultural heritage, for example, buildings and, given what my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) said, particularly church buildings. There is, for example, a case to establish a centre for the study and propagation of English music. No such centre exists and I believe that Malvern in my constituency would be an excellent place for it, given that it was the home of Elgar.

As several hon. Members have said, there is a weaker case for vast amounts of money to be given to the pursuit of a 16th century and 17th century Italian art form, opera. I always find it surprising when I study the relevant figures. Of the current planned budget of moneys for the arts, for example, which I understand stands at £195 million, more than £30 million will be given to opera—almost one fifth of the total.

There may be a case for some state sponsorship of certain arts with a limited public appeal, the performance of which incur large overheads. As the hon. Member for Newham, North-West said, in terms of preserving our heritage, it would be unsatisfactory if the quality and essential excellence of Royal Shakespeare company productions were lost to our country. I was delighted to hear from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about the Allied Lyons tie-up with the RSC, which must be a good thing.

The objective of support from the taxpayer should be to provide a bridge towards funding by those who enjoy the artistic creation in order to ensure, among other things, maximum public participation. The emphasis behind the use of state money should be directed towards promotion, making a work intelligible and ensuring the widest possible display of it. What is less acceptable is that state funds should be focused on subsidising the entertainment budgets of corporate business. One must admit that that seems to be the case at Covent Garden. I was extremely encouraged to hear today that Glyndebourne has been extensively developed at no expense to public funds.

The value and development of culture depend on the efforts and the talents of individuals, not on the injection of state funds. Genuine art will die if it is merely the product of a collectivist state programme, which, as I understand, is the essence of the Labour party's position on that matter —I think that the words that it uses are "cultural policy". I think that that is what the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) said.

Mr. Fisher *indicated assent.*

Mr. Spicer: Culture is no more and no less than the sum of its creative parts. I suppose it is because I believe that that I am a Conservative and not a socialist. It is why I believe that the state's role has to be a permissive and generalised one, especially in the context of a state that is giving the money through a network of bureaucracy and committees. It should not have a directional and interventionist role. Its emphasis should be on publicising and promotion rather than on picking winners.

The state bureaucracy is not much good at running businesses. It is even worse at painting pictures or at composing music and it is worst of all, as has been pointed out today by implication, at building buildings. The Department of the Environment building in Marsham street is perhaps a living testimony to that.

The hand of the state, especially its bureaucracy, should be as far removed as possible from the creation of artistic work. Art and government are in many ways opposite ends of a pole. Potentially, the most damaging situation of all arises when they are regarded as inseparable.

8.21 pm

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): The speech of the hon. Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) was very interesting. I was in his constituency only a few weeks ago, at the birthplace of Sir Edward Elgar. I wonder whether, if local government had not made it possible for me to have the opportunity to listen to and appreciate the works of Elgar, I would have been in the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

This excellent debate has been extremely interesting. A number of right hon. and hon. Members have referred to the fact that the timing has been unfortunate: given that four years have elapsed, one might have hoped that we would have been able to debate these matters when more right hon. and hon. Members were able to take part.

The standard and quality of speeches on both sides of the House, with the notable exception of that of the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks), have been high. The hon. Gentleman's speech reminded me of Disraeli's commentary on Gladstone—about the difference between a disaster and catastrophe. If the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington fell into the Thames, it would be classified as a disaster; if one pulled him out again, it would be a catastrophe. I understand that the hon. Gentleman's majority is something approaching 53. I hope that there are 54 or 55 Conservative opera lovers in Hayes and Harlington who may read *Hansard* and that the House will be rid of the hon. Gentleman by the time of the next election.

The debate has illustrated that the arts and culture—I do not think that there is anything wrong with the word "culture"—play an important role in continually renewing our society. For many of us, the way in which we express ourselves culturally is among our most important experiences; but there is more to it than that. As several of my hon. Friends have said, the cultural industry, if we may call it that, employs a great many people in this country —perhaps 500,000—and has a turnover of about £14 billion, in publishing, broadcasting, film and recording as well as in what one might call the straightforward artistic industries.

I stand at the Dispatch Box tonight because I am the Opposition spokesman on the arts in Wales. In the Principality, at least 5,000 people are employed directly as a result of their involvement in the arts world. In invisible earnings, only banking, travel and shipping earn more than the arts. More than £3 billion has come to this country as a result of invisible earnings from the arts industries.

Cities such as Edinburgh prosper as a result of investment in the arts. Only last year, that city gained £44 million as a result of the Edinburgh festival. In Cardiff, the Welsh national opera, St. David's hall and the Sherman theatre have all brought distinction and prosperity to our city.

[Mr. Paul Murphy]

A number of Conservative Members said that the Opposition should not criticise the Government's arts policy; that was not quite right. It is the job of an Opposition not only to oppose and to highlight such matters but to ensure that there is a proper balanced debate.

This country's spending per person on the arts is less than that of other major Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries. This country spends about £10 per person, whereas Germany spends £24; France, £21; Canada, £17; Sweden, £27; and the Netherlands, £20.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) was right to say that some of the criticisms concerning the failures and problems of art and arts policy have not been expressed in the House for about four years. There have been failures in investment. Underfunding has led to disrepair, closures and cuts, increased charges in museums and so on. An Arts Council survey showed that, of 32 theatres, 30 were now in deficit.

The good news about which the Secretary of State spoke is the work of local authorities, which spend perhaps £200 million to £300 million a year on promoting artistic ventures of one kind or another in Glasgow, Newcastle, Cardiff, Glasgow, Sheffield and other places helping to regenerate those cities.

However—and I know that this is the direct responsibility not of the Secretary of State for National Heritage but of the Secretaries of State for Education, for Wales, for Scotland and for the Environment—there have been substantial cuts in council funding in the past few years, which have inevitably meant that our local authorities' arts budgets have been cut. That has meant that many arts organisations are now confronted with financial insecurity because they have no guarantee of continued revenue support.

There is also the problem of compulsory competitive tendering. However important that may be in terms of local government, it means that the emphasis has to be on the commercial rather than the artistic side. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) rightly pointed to the problem of discretionary grants. In Wales, such grants have virtually disappeared: our young people no longer have the grants that enabled them to train in ballet, dance, music and so on. That means that an area of activity is now denied to our young men and our young women—or at least to those from less privileged families.

Most arts organisations expect their grants to remain static or to fall in real terms in the coming year. There is a huge variation in what our local authorities now spend on the arts. Clwyd, for example, spends £1.5 million on theatres and concert halls alone; West Glamorgan spends only 23p per person on the arts.

The biggest restriction, which the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) mentioned, was on the arts in education. Music teaching in many schools has been reduced or almost entirely cut. In South Glamorgan, 36 peripatetic music teachers have been made redundant. There has been a severe decline in visits to museums, theatres and concerts, and school orchestras in some areas no longer exist. We have to consider also that, as a result of the reform of local government, which is partly happening in England and is rapidly happening in Wales and in Scotland—in a sense, those two countries are guinea pigs and pointers to what might occur in England—the impact of the move to unitary authorities could well have a damaging effect on our arts, music and other ventures. For example, Wales now has eight large county councils, all of which are due to disappear. They will be replaced by 24 unitary authorities, inevitably much smaller and without the resources. Will those unitary authorities in Wales—and later also in Scotland and England—have the same commitment to financing, bolstering and supporting artistic ventures that now depend heavily on county-wide funding? There are geographical restrictions, as a small borough council may not feel inclined to support the arts in an area many miles away and may not have the money to do so. We have already seen the consequences of the abolition of the metropolitan counties—a reduction in expenditure on the arts of nearly £9 million.

The hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) rightly referred to the importance of orchestras. We should be concerned not only about those important orchestras with which London is blessed—we can walk from this House to the south bank or catch a tube to the Barbican and listen to them—but with orchestras in the regions and counties of Britain, such as the Welsh national orchestra and the Bournemouth symphony orchestra, about which we have heard today. Many other orchestras that depend on local government support could disappear, including county and youth orchestras.

Even more significant is the future of those now training to be members of orchestras. Where will their training come from if peripatetic teachers disappear? Young men and women will lose the opportunity to join school orchestras, move to county orchestras and then join the main orchestras in London and the regions. The talent that undoubtedly exists will not be tapped; it will be lost as a direct consequence of local cuts in finance and the reform of local government that now faces the whole country.

In Gwent, 52 peripatetic staff teach music; 40,000 lessons are given every year; 5,000 pupils are taught; 1,200 music exams are taken, with a 95 per cent. pass rate; there are 23 music groups; and, on 18 April in St. David's hall in Cardiff, 350 young people from Gwent performed in a Gwent showcase concert. The possibility of that happening after the reform of local government, once our counties have disappeared, will become increasingly remote.

Another problem is that small arts centres, which now depend heavily on county funding, could disappear. The director of the Llantarnam Grange arts centre in my constituency, Sara Bowie, sent me a letter saying:

"our main problem always remains that of insufficient core funding—a problem which faces many of the arts organisations today.

it is . . . almost impossible to plan to grow and develop when our funding is so hand to mouth and not consistent from year to year."

The Wales Association for the Performing Arts has also written to us, saying that it is deeply troubled about theatre in Wales because of local government reform:

"This unique provision in Wales is held up as an example of outstanding success in theatre in education services throughout the British and European arts community and unless this central funding is provided, the education resource element of the service, for example the wide range of workshops, teachers packs and follow-up study services, will be severely endangered and possibly lost."

The danger that the whole country faces because of the move to unitary authorities is substantial, and I hope that the Secretary of State will argue with his Cabinet

colleagues who represent Wales, Scotland, the environment and education that it is vital that we do not lose that element of funding for the arts as a result of the reform of local government.

May I mention two other matters in Wales? The first concerns the national museum of Wales, of which I am a governor. At our last annual meeting, shortly after the Queen opened the new addition to the museum, we were told that, at the same time as that superb development was taking place in Cardiff, the schools' museum service was seriously at risk as a consequence of cuts in local government funding.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) said, the Welsh Arts Council received an increase in relative terms. Strangely enough, however, the reduction in the English Arts Council's budget has meant that the Welsh national opera, which toured in England, has had its budget considerably reduced. In common with other opera companies, it has had to make a cut of £500,000, to make singers, musicians and skilled technicians redundant, and to put on fewer performances and productions.

As the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) said, opportunities for new composers—and especially for new commissions by living composers—are now severely reduced. Obviously, the opera companies put on the most popular operas which bring in the most money, with the result that new commissions are denied.

The director of the Welsh national opera company, an American of great distinction, Matthew Epstein, who brought a great deal of dedication to his job and a great deal of commitment to Wales, has resigned as a direct result of cuts in the money going to the Welsh national opera. In a letter to Lord Davies of Llandinam, the chairman, he wrote:

"This lack of funding cannot be seen as a fault of the Arts Councils, regularly vilified by many in the public and press, but rather as a result of inadequate funding and support of these Councils at the very highest level of government, as it is expressed through the Department of National Heritage.

The arts in the U.K. are under the greatest threat and siege, and the situation must be improved if the entire public of cultural life is to survive.

While understanding the fiscal reasons that these decisions must be taken, in a sense . . . I make myself redundant."

I fear that his retirement is a loss not only to the Welsh national opera but to England and Wales.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I am pleased to hear my hon. Friend's references to the Welsh national opera. He knows of my interest not only personally but because the opera's headquarters is in my constituency and I am a trustee to the proposed opera house. Does he agree that the strong cross-party support of the Welsh national opera is twofold? First, the fact that it is a flagship and provides an image of Wales at home and abroad is extremely important economically as well as in arts terms. Secondly, it has sought to reach every village, town and community in Wales—I pay tribute to Matthew Epstein for that, too—and inner-city communities such as Splott, so that opera is taken to the whole community rather than remaining remote and for the few.

Mr. Murphy: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. A great aspect of the Welsh national opera was not simply that it put on opera productions in the new theatre in Cardiff—I hope that it will do so in the new opera house in Cardiff in the years ahead—but that it went out to the valleys of south Wales, for example, and the valley in my constituency, where it put on the great production of "Noye's Fludde" involving many school children in my constituency.

Oddly enough, the Welsh national opera also went to Bristol, the home of the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington. Indeed, it went to one of the most deprived parts of that city—a housing estate with high unemployment and no bank or launderette, where 22,000 people live. Its director received a letter from a teacher from Hartcliffe school in that part of Bristol, who wrote:

"It is with some shock that we read that you will leave W.N.O."

She said that his Cinderella project on the Hartcliffe estate was admirable and that

"Above all, it showed Bristol and the S.W. that despite the riots, poverty and surrounding difficulties, children and parents of the area could work together to deliver a 'real gem' of a production."

The letter explained how the production had affected people from that part of Bristol. For example, a young lad called Paul Hands was going to the royal opera house for a week and to drama school; 100 students were working with D'Oyly Carte; and 25 students were working with professional musicians. Matthew Epstein and the Welsh national opera company were excellent at taking opera to the people, but that has stopped happening as a direct result of what has happened to the funds.

Mr. Renton: Is not the hon. Gentleman telling us only one side of the story? I say that although I have great respect for the achievements of Welsh national opera and the artistic knowledge of Matthew Epstein, whom I remember with great pleasure meeting two or three years ago. But Mr. Matthew Epstein has been in the job for only two or three years and I can remember a substantial subsidy being given by the Welsh Office to Welsh national opera in either 1989 or 1990 to wipe out its accumulated debt. That subsidy was the successor to a similar one given to Welsh national opera about five or six years before—again, to wipe off accumulated debt. That is the other side of the picture. While I sympathise with the emotion with which the hon. Gentleman makes his case, there is another side. Perhaps Welsh national opera has been regularly living beyond its means despite special subsidies from the Welsh Office. Perhaps its financial organisation has not been that good.

Mr. Murphy: The financial organisation of Welsh national opera has been superb—there has been no great problem there. There has been a long-running saga of underfunding, which it has taken a long time to wipe out. The problem was caused by the cuts in money from the English Arts Council rather than the Welsh one. We are all agreed that the money that has come from the Welsh Office has been admirable, but it has been insufficient to allow the company to do what many of my hon. Friends want opera companies to do—to take opera out to the people and communities so that everyone can enjoy it.

I recall going to an opera in Cardiff some years ago when there was a different director; so bad was the production that 50 per cent. of the audience walked out—I was one of them. Times have changed considerably since then. What has happened to opera is sad news for Wales.

Mr. Michael: I must tell the right hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) that, although there have been

[Mr. Michael]

generous contributions from public funds to assist the development of Welsh national opera, it was made clear at a recent meeting of parliamentary friends—not only by Matthew Epstein, but by others involved in the company—that the tightening of the budget and the demands that come with different contributions, particularly those from England, require additional performances. That requirement creates a constraint. If we are not to lose the additional productions that will be necessary for the success of the new opera house or the community-based contributions, we must ensure that the screw is not tightened. But that is what is happening.

Mr. Murphy: I entirely agree—the issue is one of access. Some 51 per cent. of all adults in Wales went to some sort of artistic event last year—a staggering percentage, especially when we consider that in Wales, with its rugby and other sporting traditions, more people attend sporting activities. I understand that in the 1980s, more than 37 million people in Britain went to the theatre every year.

We must widen access, and we have the opportunity to do so because of technology. The hon. Member for Twickenham talked about the increased technology that will come to this country over the next few years. Technology and videos can be used to widen audiences dramatically. We must ensure that we try to make the arts more accessible to young people. There is a strong demand for live music venues. Libraries should be protected and safeguarded as much as possible.

Although there is inevitably a role for sponsorship, that alone is not enough. Sponsorship is strongly influenced by the prevailing economic climate. It tends to favour large and well-known companies and venues and is certainly biased towards London—42 per cent. of sponsorship occurs in London, whereas there is 5 per cent. for Northern Ireland, the east, the east midlands and the south-west of England put together. Sponsorship is rarely long term.

I was glad to hear the Secretary of State talk about the national lottery in terms of additionality. We are all concerned that any money from the national lottery that goes to the arts should be in addition to finance already provided by the Treasury to the National Heritage Department, to the territorial Departments and to the Department for Education.

I stress that it is Opposition policy that local authorities should have a statutory responsibility for the promotion of the arts in their area. That is a commitment that the Labour party will give at the next general election. Similarly, we believe that there is a role for regional government—we shall set up a Welsh Assembly in Wales, a Parliament in Scotland and regional government in Britain. Those organisations, like their counterparts in the rest of Europe, will have a great influence and will strongly support the regional arts up and down the country.

Wales has a serious potential crisis in arts funding. I hope that the message will be returned to Ministers in the Welsh Office—as it will to members of the Standing Committee on the Local Government (Wales) Bill—that there must be some interim support for artistic ventures in the next couple of years. If that is not forthcoming, the Principality will be seriously disadvantaged.

This debate has been extremely interesting. We have not had the time or opportunity to touch on other sectors in which the arts impinge on everyone's lives. More than 3 million people are involved in the non-professional arts sector. We could also discuss conservation and heritage, and educating and training artists. We lose graduate designers to other countries. As my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) said, we certainly lose our best film makers, often to the west coast of the United States of America.

Mr. Jessel: Did I hear the hon. Gentleman aright? Did he say that his party proposed to set up regional bodies for England as well as for Scotland and Wales? Is not the hon. Gentleman aware that, whatever mixed feelings there may be in Scotland and Wales, there is bound to be hardly any support for the idea of setting up enormous and hugely expensive regional bureaucracies all over England—adding another tier to existing bureaucracy, interfering with people's lives and taking begging bowls to Brussels?

Mr. Murphy: I do not know where the hon. Gentleman obtained his evidence that there is no feeling for regional government in parts of England. If he travels to Newcastle and the north, he will find that there is a strong feeling that, if Scotland has some sort of national government, the same must happen to the regions of England. There is no reason why those governments have to be similar in form all over the country; that is not the case in Spain. The hon. Gentleman knows as well as I do that, at the last general election, the Labour party gave a commitment—which it will reassert at the next election—that there will be regional government throughout Britain. If that regional government is set up, one of its major functions will be to sponsor the arts in the regions of England as well as in the countries of Wales and Scotland.

The debate has been interesting and useful. I hope that the artistic community in Britain will have an opportunity to listen to, and read, the debate. In my valley I have five male voice choirs, three brass bands, ladies and mixed choirs, a lively theatre company, a local authority theatre, an arts centre, two museums and an enormous range of cultural societies. In addition, we produced Janet Price and Gwyneth Jones. All that came from one relatively small valley of south Wales, which is not full of "luvvies"—whatever they are supposed to be—as the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington would say. We produced all that from one valley. Perhaps not every constituency is as good as mine in producing that sort of artistic development and activity, but most are. The potential exists for every part of this country to develop artistic strength and an artistic wealth of experience among men and women. I fear that such development is threatened by the uncertain future of local government changes, central Government cuts and budget restrictions in schools.

At the last election, the Conservative party said that it would maintain support for the arts. I am not sure whether it has kept that promise completely, but unless it takes that statement seriously it will let down not only this generation, but generations to come.

8.49 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Iain Sproat): I begin by agreeing with the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy), who has wound up the debate for the Opposition. This has been an extremely interesting debate. Those who doubt the

civilising quality of the arts might change their minds, as there has been a certain civilised quality about the evening which is not always evident in our debates.

I will try to answer some of the points that were raised. I start with the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher). I acknowledge absolutely the genuine fervour and passion of his support for, and commitment to, the arts. I do so wholeheartedly and without qualification. But I think that it probably does not do the cause that we both have at heart—that of helping the arts world—any good to paint the current situation so black.

Of course we wish that things were better in many areas—although we might disagree about what those areas are. Everything is not as we would wish. But the fact is that the Government have said that they believe strongly in the arts. The Government have put their money where their mouth is, in that they have increased spending for the arts.

One can quibble about the percentage points—whether it is 45 per cent. for 1992-93, or 38 per cent. because of the cut which has just been made in the Arts Council grant and the filching away of Greater London council money. But, in spite of all that, we are still talking about a 35 per cent. increase in real terms in Government spending on the Arts Council.

I think that it is also very important to emphasise the money—another £200 million—that has been spent by local authorities. There has been a huge increase in business sponsorship of the arts. Although it is true that there is a blip in sponsorship at the moment, it is not as big a blip as it might appear. I think that the hon. Gentleman said that there was a 13 per cent. fall in sponsorship of the arts last year. But that was a fall on the previous year, when we had a huge increase in sponsorship from the Japan festival. Someone else said that Glyndebourne raised £38 million over a few years. That has certainly increased the base upon which the percentage was judged.

We have come from the point of £500,000 in sponsorship of the arts almost 20 years ago to something approaching £60 million in business sponsorship every year. That sponsorship has done a great deal for the arts. Although we might wish that it was more, I think that it would be wrong to underestimate the increases in this area.

Of course, the funds from the national lottery are still to come. At this stage, I can give the assurance for which hon. Members on both sides of the House have asked: lottery spending will be additional to spending which the Government would otherwise have made. The hon. Member for Torfaen asked for that assurance at the end of his remarks, and I can tell him that that is the case.

Although I do not wish to make too much of the speech by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central, I think that it may be damaging, because many people who have listened to the speech or who will read about it in the newspapers tomorrow will think that the situation is much gloomier than it really is. The fact is that the cut in expenditure for the British Arts Council is 1.7 per cent. A cut of only 1.7 per cent. during the worst recession that anyone can remember is not a ferocious cut.

The hon. Gentleman also said that the arts had been singled out for cuts. I think that many people in the House would say, would that it had been the only area to be hit. I wish it were not so, but the English tourist board, the Sports Council and the national maritime museum have had spending cuts. The hon. Gentleman should not say that the arts have been singled out for cuts.

Mr. Fisher: While we can debate and discuss the global figures—we have done that, and will continue to do so—will the Minister not accept that what is important for individual regional theatres, orchestras and galleries is the money that they receive? Will he not accept simple, basic, factual statements, such as that purchase grants to the national museum have been frozen since 1985? Most regional theatres have to produce fewer productions with smaller casts. Almost every regional theatre is reducing its rehearsal times and casts, because its grants have become less in real terms in the past 15 years.

The Minister must acknowledge that galleries, theatre companies and orchestras which are playing to full houses are in deficit. The reason is that, leaving aside the macro figure, their grants are smaller now than they were.

Mr. Sproat: I do not wish to hide behind what my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) called the "humbug" of the arm's-length principle—hon. Members opposite repeated this afternoon that they believe in the principle—but the downside of the principle is that the people that you and I might like to fund, Mr. Deputy Speaker, do not get funding because the decision is made by the Arts Council. I agree with the hon. Gentleman on that point.

The Albert memorial was referred to in the debate, and there was a misunderstanding about it, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State tried to clear up. The £1 million that will be spent on refurbishing the Albert memorial this financial year did not come from Arts Council funding from the National Heritage Department; it came from English Heritage, which squeezed the money from its own bureaucracy. It is true that, in future years, some 50 per cent. of the money that we believe will have to be spent on the Albert memorial will come from the Department of National Heritage, but this year, as it happens, not one penny has come from that source.

I now come to the very dullest part of my speech, for which I apologise. Hon. Members have referred to spending by the Department of National Heritage on itself. I am glad to say that it is not as was charged. I will quote from this helpfully copious note, which says:

"DNH central running costs and capital show a real terms decrease of almost 12 per cent. . . . in the period 1993-94 to 1996-97."

It has been reduced.

"There have been significant capital costs associated with setting up the new department and those are set to continue reducing. The running costs are not an additional burden on the public purse, because they are saved in the departments which used to house DNH responsibilities."

I apologise to the House for that tedious piece of information, but it is important to get it on the record.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) very courteously apologised for having to leave the Chamber—we all know what is going on in the country at the moment. Various other hon. Members, such as the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott), also apologised for having to leave before the wind-up of the debate.

My right hon. Friend made a number of very important points which I will touch on briefly. First, he mentioned the decline of music in schools, which a number of other hon. and right hon. Members also mentioned. It is a very worrying problem. It is mainly a matter for the Department

[Mr. Sproat]

for Education, but my right hon. Friend and I are in close and helpful contact with that Department to see what can be done about what is undoubtedly a serious problem.

My right hon. Friend also talked about the difference in tax regimes between the United States and Britain. In the United States, if they give money it helps them, but here, if we give money it helps the recipient. There is a balance to be struck, but he was urging that we move towards the American way. It is an important argument, and we shall certainly look at it.

The figures that my right hon. Friend gave about the money spent on orchestras were very striking. He said that about £22 million per year is spent on the Chicago symphony orchestra. He did not say it, but I believe that the leader of the Chicago symphony orchestra gets a salary of about $250,000 a year, which also goes some way to explaining why people are so keen to work there.

Last night, thanks to the courtesy of the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), I went to hear the Royal Liverpool philharmonic orchestra—which has an income of about £4 million a year, yet manages to be a world-class orchestra—in that wonderful philharmonic hall which is a credit to Liverpool and the whole country.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex quoted Lord Gowrie's excellent sentence about the Arts Council seeking to

"nurture the arts, not spoil them."

Both sides of the House will agree that that is a good motto. My right hon. Friend raised a point that he has quite properly raised on other occasions: whether or not we ought to fund more directly certain recipients of Arts Council money. That is an extremely important issue that we all take extremely seriously.

We should take a long view of our institutions. The Arts Council, which is coming up to its half-century, has served the nation and the arts well, and one should look at the heart and principle of a institution rather than its incidental vicissitudes. By raising the profile of the arts in those near 50 years, under all Governments, public funding of the arts has risen by more than 5 per cent. compound—if I gave the figures, we could quibble about the little points, but funding has increased very greatly indeed.

Our spending has not been lavish by continental standards, but to judge by the fruits our investment has been remarkably shrewd, and we have gained through a continuity which chopping and changing Ministers could not sustain. On balance, that might be my argument against my right hon. Friend's extremely important and cogent points.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), as so often, made a thoughtful and profound speech. I associate myself with the credit and sympathy which he handed metaphysically to Lord Palumbo, who had a hard row to hoe and did it extremely well. I join the hon. Gentleman in paying tribute to him.

I agree with him about the need for a combination in funding of private patronage, public funding and sponsorship. It is a stool with three legs, and we want to keep it that way. He also talked about music in schools, and I have already answered that point.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland and the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) referred to young people going to drama and dance conservatoires. It is a serious problem. I am not sure whether I misheard the hon. Gentleman, but I thought he said that the figure had fallen to 44 per cent. The figure is 54 per cent. I agree that it is a serious decline, but it is not as bad as that. It is extremely important, and we are looking at the matter at this moment to see whether anything can be done.

My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) made the point that national lottery spending should be additional, and I am glad to confirm again that that is so. He gave a moving catalogue of the breadth, depth and beauty of the national heritage and his own constituency. I agree that in Britain we tend to play down our achievements in the arts, and we should not do so.

I join the hon. Member for Newham, North-West in saying that I also heard that marvellous performance by my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham of Mozart's piano concerto No.21 in C major, played by the Mozart Players. It was a very moving occasion.

Mr. Tony Banks: Going back briefly to the point that the Minister made earlier about the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) and the lottery, I also raised that issue. Can the hon. Gentleman take me through how it will be done? When Treasury Ministers look at the spending requirements of a Department and the resources that they are going to allocate, they must look at the income being received from all sources. I cannot see how the Treasury can tell the Secretary of State for National Heritage that they will forget that money entirely. Knowing Treasury Ministers as I do—the Minister knows them far better—can we believe that they really take that position? Is that a realistic assumption? I can accept the Minister's good intentions, but will the money genuinely be set aside for this purpose?

Mr. Sproat: It is my understanding that it will be. I offer the hon. Gentleman one further thought: the money from the lottery is, by and large, expected to be spent on capital projects. The money that we give the Arts Council is largely spent on revenue projects. I agree that no Parliament can bind its successor, but I can only reiterate what I understand to be the Government's sincere and definite intention in the matter of the lottery spending.

My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham raised two important points, of which the first was the funding for choral societies. I shall certainly check that and let him know what the situation is. If anything needs to be done, I shall ask him to come and have a talk with me so that we can work out what he thinks should be done.

My hon. Friend's second point was about the preservation of ships from the second world war. I do not know too much about that, but it is a good objective, and I shall look into it and let my hon. Friend know what I discover. The same procedure can then apply.

The hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) courteously let us know that he would have to leave early. I agree with him that brass bands are an extremely important part of our culture. In all the talk about opera, symphonies and so on, we should not forget that. I shall come to the lower end of the market in a second or two, when I refer to the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks), but I certainly take seriously what the hon. Member for Hemsworth said.

The hon. Gentleman also asked me whether I enjoyed myself on Saturday at Wembley. We both enjoyed the match very much. I agree, too, that we should put on record

the fact that, at Wembley on Saturday, there were 78,384 people but not one arrest. That is greatly to the credit of rugby league.

The hon. Member for Hemsworth also asked me whether I would visit the sculpture park near Wakefield. I was also invited to do that on Saturday by Rodney Walker, the chairman of rugby league. I certainly hope to visit the park—it is just a case of finding the right day.

My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), in his usual authoritative and informed way, used what I thought was a good phrase—the incredible artistic riches of this country. I agree with him and with my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham that we should never play down the marvellous artistic heritage we have.

In response to my hon. Friend's call for vigorous action by the Department of National Heritage, I can promise him that my right hon. Friend will fight extremely strongly for the arts. My hon. Friend will no doubt have noticed that, even after the settlement last year, the Secretary of State managed to find an extra £800,000 for the Arts Council —money that was not in the original indicative budget.

My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South also made the important point about the lottery money being additional, and I can confirm again that it will be.

I thought that my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington was going to provide a sort of one-man opposition—until I heard the profound speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer), who argued an important case very well. It is only healthy in these debates that what one might call the arts lobby should not get everything its own way. I therefore congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington on what he said.

There is a view that needs to be considered here. If we are telling the poor, the sick and the elderly that we are going to spend £75 million from the lottery on the arts, over and above the £186 million that we are about to spend on the arts in England, we must always be very clear in our minds that we are spending the money properly. It is a great deal of money, and there are many people who need a lot of money which they are not getting. We should therefore not laugh at the ways in which that idea may sometimes be expressed.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West talked about Richard Branson. I have not the slightest idea whether Mr. Branson will run the lottery. I shall have no influence whatsoever on the decision. One man, and one man alone, will—Mr. Peter Davies, who is the director-general of Oflot. The Government will play no scintilla of a part in the decision. The hon. Gentleman asked about the conservatoires. I agree that this is a very serious matter, and we are considering it seriously.

I should like, in conclusion, to summarise what my right hon. Friend and I have said: that the Government are committed to continuing their policy of creating conditions in which the arts can flourish. It is a successful policy, for, while I accept that the arts world is subject to financial and other pressures, there can be no doubt that the arts in this country are very healthy indeed. Long may they remain so.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

Drug Misuse (West Suffolk)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

9.10 pm

Mr. Richard Spring (Bury St. Edmunds): I am glad of the opportunity to introduce this Adjournment debate, and I am grateful to the Minister of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Fareham (Mr. Lloyd), for being here to reply.

In November 1992 general practitioners in Newmarket, which is in my constituency, asked me for a meeting to discuss the rising incidence of drugs abuse in the town and their resulting considerable anxieties. I should say immediately that there is little difference between drugs misuse in Newmarket and drugs misuse in other East Anglian towns. However, there is a history of drug taking in the horse racing industry, which gives it a special twist. I spoke to the police and to the West Suffolk drugs advisory service, and so began a personal odyssey for me, culminating in tonight's debate.

My local campaign to highlight the dangers of substance abuse was helped by the extremely supportive stance taken by the *Newmarket Journal.* In the spring of 1993, my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) visited my constituency and spoke most persuasively about substance abuse to the pupils at Newmarket upper school. Today, the Newmarket drugs task group comprises representatives from the district council, the police, probation officers, the clergy, schools, the racing industry, community education and the drugs advisory service. I am most grateful to Forest Heath district council—in particular, to its chief executive—for its financial and moral support of our efforts.

Professor Howard Parker of Manchester university has carried out research showing that 47 per cent. of 16-year-olds in Manchester and Merseyside have taken drugs. However, drugs abuse is no longer a feature of urban areas alone. A report commissioned by the Home Office and the East Sussex Drugs Advisory Council—ESDAC —produced the alarming statistic that the incidence of drug taking in the North Wealden district of East Sussex was almost identical to that in Brighton. More than one fifth of 14 and 15-year-olds had tried an illicit drug, and, of those, 5 per cent. are likely to develop problems owing to drug usage.

There is an additional danger in rural areas like west Suffolk. The more erratic supply of drugs results in the temptation to try yet harder drugs or lethal so-called cocktail mixes, with all the attendant consequences. ESDAC is probably the most sophisticated body of its sort in Britain. This is due largely to my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone), who, both in the House and outside, has highlighted the dangers of substance abuse.

There is clear evidence that drugs abuse is now a problem in every part of Britain. Unquestionably, the rise in juvenile crime can be traced to rising levels of drugs use nationally. Until recently there has been a misconception that crime is a real problem only in metropolitan areas. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has changed that perception by sponsoring the parish constables initiative and by encouraging chief constables to use new and more effective rural policing methods. The fruits of that are already apparent in my constituency.

[Mr. Richard Spring]

Every Member of Parliament who represents a rural constituency should be grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for what has already been achieved.

The bulk of drug taking in Britain is confined to cannabis. In 1992, 488 people in Suffolk—that is up from 177 in 1989—were found to be in possession of cannabis, and 76 per cent. were cautioned. Cautions are generally regarded as successful because there is a low re-arrest rate. The Home Office initiative on drugs usage and drugs prevention in December 1993 dealt with the question of whether soft drug users moved into harder drugs. It pointed to a link between the use of cannabis and some other drugs, but not very dangerous drugs such as heroin, cocaine and crack. There was a clearly observed link between cannabis, alcohol and tobacco. In any event, the number of registered addicts grew by 17 per cent. last year.

I say bluntly that I am opposed to the decriminalisation of cannabis. Even some policemen believe that prosecuting users of cannabis is a waste of their time. Some people regard cannabis as simply relaxing and recreational, but perhaps it is not widely known that it can stay in the body system for up to 30 days. One of the most respected professionals in substance abuse studies graphically likened cannabis to pouring boiling water into a crystal glass: a tiny flaw could cause the glass to break. In his professional experience, and that of others, cannabis usage can trigger considerable mental disorder in those suffering from even mild forms of schizophrenia, phobias and depression.

Additionally, the strength of cannabis has greatly increased. One variant, skunk, can cause hallucinations. The legalisation of cannabis would send entirely the wrong signal to young people. Those with a more daredevil mentality would be tempted into more dangerous drugs just for the added thrill of trying something illegal. Drug pushers increasingly offer a full spectrum of drugs merchandise. Those seeking to buy only cannabis are usually offered harder drugs too. Users of cannabis should know that they run the risk of getting a criminal record.

In the past year there have been no fewer then 9,000 major drug seizures. The police and customs now believe that the drugs market in Britain has a street value of £3 billion. That is big business. Ruthless, well-armed and determined gangs, ranging from Chinese triads to Jamaican yardies and the new eastern European mafias, are muscling in on the British drugs market, according to the National Criminal Intelligence Service.

Of course, money from drug smugglers can be seized and confiscated but murder, even of policemen, is a feature of their existence. The director of intelligence of the Metropolitan police believes that one in four burglaries is drug related. Police studies in Liverpool, Manchester and the Wirral suggest that 85 per cent. of heroin addicts support their dependence through property crime. There is undoubtedly a direct link to both the rise in criminal activity and the mental disorder among young people and substance abuse. That is truly a cancer in our national life.

Since 1989, there have been more than 400 deaths just because of glue sniffing. A campaign launched earlier this year by the Department of Health and aimed at parents sought to help them to talk more easily to their children and to watch out for signs of misuse. That was greatly welcomed.

Substance abuse destroys lives and causes death, grief and misery to families and loved ones. Parents must be at the heart of the fight against abuse, not only because it is their responsibility as parents but because it is they who so often have to pick up the pieces when their children become addicts. The Government's appreciation of the horrors of drug misuse is now high. However, until recently there was no attempt to co-ordinate various departmental anti-drugs activities. The Government spend £535 million each year on combating drugs abuse. Yet it is plain that we have not been making the best use of that tremendous sum of money. Of course we need international co-operation. Some 40 per cent. of drugs seized come from other European Union countries. Recent initiatives include a Europe-wide drugs intelligence service and the permanent stationing of a drugs officer at Interpol headquarters in Lyon.

Welcome though that is, the main thrust of our attack on drugs misuse must come at the local level, but under an umbrella of nationally agreed priorities. The overall conclusion of "Across the Divide", a report to the Department of Health that was published early this year, is that a new shape needs to be given to local collaboration aimed at curbing drugs and misuse. The emphasis is on involving local communities in prevention. It advocated drugs misuse community partnerships as a strategic focus to assess the needs, to monitor the extent of drug misuse and to develop and co-ordinate an appropriate strategy. The local community partnerships should comprise commissioning bodies such as the police and the health authority, local government representatives, local businesses and other community representatives.

That accords very much with what we are embryonically trying to do in Newmarket. In many respects, it parallels the existing Home Office safer cities programme. Crime prevention activity is co-ordinated locally with co-operation at a number of levels. It is a nation-wide attempt to cut criminality, through policies carried out at a local level. Participation by local people is a clear pointer to what can be achieved by partnership, and the results have been impressive.

A number of countries have introduced a national drugs strategy. There is no perfect role model of success. Canada has, however, the one that is of perhaps the greatest interest. It was launched in 1987 and 70 per cent. of funding went to reducing demand for drugs via prevention, treatment and rehabilitation. Specific groups at risk, such as young people, have been targeted. The Canadian Government believe their anti-drugs strategy to have been a success. For example, the number of first-time teenage users of cannabis has dropped from 47 to 29 per cent. Some 790 community action projects are active in reducing the harm from substance abuse. Prevention is regarded as critical and the strategy aims to assist communities in their fight against substance abuse. Therefore, I applaud the establishment of the central drugs co-ordination unit under the safe hands of my right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council. I welcome its remit to establish a clear strategic framework. Importantly, it will take the lead in devising plans for local co-ordination in tackling the drugs menace.

In years to come, it will be seen that one of the achievements of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was his determination to cut red tape and bureaucracy. The appointment of a Minister for deregulation, and his remit to cut across all Government Departments, will be

regarded as an important policy decision. Once the drugs co-ordinator makes her report and recommendations in September, I urge my right hon. Friend personally to give support to a national plan of action that will not be impaired by any interdepartmental blockages. I urge him to appoint a specific Minister to see that the strategy is fully implemented.

The role of teachers and general practitioners in the drugs issue is pivotal. Many doctors do not like prescribing drugs for addicts in their surgeries, and we need to be sensitive to that. Additionally, many teachers do not feel comfortable about the issue of drugs abuse. I welcome, therefore, the proposed revision of science within the national curriculum to emphasise substance abuse and its effect on the body. Programmes specifically designed for schools, such as that devised by Turning Point in London, have the effect of raising pupils' awareness of drugs in a creative and informative way. As the Government consider possible changes to initial teacher training, drugs education should be highlighted in the context of overall health education. Similarly, GPs should attend courses dealing with drugs issues.

Recently, I visited Highpoint prison in Suffolk, where concern was expressed to me about growing drug usage. I urge more rigorous screening of inmates and visitors. As to prevention, short-term prisoners should be required to attend a drugs programme. There are real grounds for alarm that our prisons are being overwhelmed by the drugs problem and are breeding grounds for greater usage.

I refer finally to the role of employers. In the United States, workplace drugs testing is a £400 million business. The US Government require alcohol and drug tests for workers such as truck drivers, airline pilots and oil tanker captains. Increasingly, anybody applying to an American pharmaceutical, engineering or chemicals firm is required to undergo a drug test. I applaud the fact that British Rail has a comprehensive screening policy for drugs and alcohol, stemming from the requirements of the Transport and Works Act 1992. Other employers followed suit.

I urge that that practice be followed more widely. Nothing is more likely to concentrate the mind of a young person leaving school or university and seeking a job than obtaining a clean bill of health. That will act as a disincentive to drug taking. I wish to persuade employers to undertake routine random drug screening of employees for the sake of them both. I urge the Government to set an example and to give encouragement to the private sector.

In combating the drugs menace, we have not given sufficient considered attention to the preventive side. That is difficult to measure and evaluate but must be done, as we draw up a coherent strategy for prevention, rehabilitation and enforcement. Statutory and voluntary bodies dealing with substance abuse, including alcohol, work best when they work together.

It is tempting for those of us who are practitioners of politics to sloganise about drugs. It is easy to talk exclusively of enforcement. That is vital but only part of the picture. Similarly, the chattering classes, in seeking to decriminalise cannabis, only demonstrate their superficiality and distance from the horrific reality of the drugs problem.

West Suffolk has made a start in the battle for minds and bodies against drugs. It is a small step in the right direction. By the end of the decade, I hope to see a multitude of community task forces pushing back the tide of substance abuse under the umbrella of committed and clear national parameters. If Parliament can put such a programme in place, it will be a worthy memorial to those whose lives have been destroyed or terminated by the scourge of drug taking.

9.27 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring) for initiating this Adjournment debate on drug misuse in west Suffolk, as it provides another opportunity to discuss one of the most serious threats facing society today. My hon. Friend's speech demonstrated his deep concern and the great effort that he has made in investigating the problems involved —particularly in his part of the country, but drug misuse is global. There are few countries in the developed or developing world that are not affected.

In this country, all the indicators suggest—as did my hon. Friend—that drug misuse continues to rise, although measuring the extent of the problem is notoriously difficult. Drug misuse knows no social barriers. It can affect those living in inner cities, suburbs and rural areas —no part of the country is immune.

Where rural areas are concerned, such as some parts of my hon. Friend's constituency, the picture is only beginning to come into focus. We need to know considerably more. I will mention briefly some relevant research projects funded by the Home Office.

An exploratory study has been conducted by Dr. Russell Newcombe into drug misuse in rural east Sussex, with a view to developing local community-based drugs prevention. Findings showed that cannabis use in rural areas was lower than in urban areas. For other drugs, the picture was less clear. The published report provides recommendations for the development of a local drugs misuse strategy and drugs prevention work of the kind that my hon. Friend particularly recommended. That work is currently being taken forward by local agencies. We have also funded a telephone survey in Greater Manchester that aims to compare self-reported drug usage and attitudes of rural and urban residents.

Another example of research that we are funding is the Somerset county youth service project, which is carrying out research to estimate the prevalence of drug misuse among the local population and the transient population of young holidaymakers.

I want to mention the Government's national strategic framework for tackling drug misuse, to which my hon. Friend referred with a note of criticism in his voice. It has been in place since the mid-1980s. It involves simultaneous action on five main fronts: improving international co-operation to reduce the influx of drugs from abroad; increasing the effectiveness of police and customs enforcement; maintaining effective deterrence and tight domestic controls; developing measures to prevent the spread of drugs misuse, including publicity and education; and improving treatment and rehabilitation.

The strategy aims to reduce both the supply of and demand for drugs. It is as much concerned with prevention and treatment as it is with enforcement action against drug trafficking. The issues that it addresses cover a range of policy areas, which are the responsibility of a number of Departments and involve expenditure, as my hon. Friend said, of more than £500 million a year.

[Mr. Peter Lloyd]

I want to clarify one point for my hon. Friend: the strategy has been co-ordinated and monitored since its inception by successive ministerial committees. It is now being overseen by a committee under the chairmanship of my right hon. Friend the Lord President.

The strategy, however, has been in place for several years. It is timely, therefore, to review it. That is why the new central drugs co-ordination unit was announced last December, which my hon. Friend particularly welcomed. The unit has been given two major tasks: first, to ensure that departmental policies are planned, developed and implemented in England with a clear strategic framework; and, secondly, to take the lead in devising an effective basis for local co-ordination of action to tackle the drugs problem. Both are vital tasks. We need to ensure that the strategy is really addressing the areas where the problem lies and that resources are targeted where they are most needed.

We must also ensure that at ground level there are clear and coherent structures for delivering the strategy. In both respects, particularly the latter, there are no doubt improvements to be made. Part of the purpose of setting up the central unit is to get from those who work in the drugs field ideas for those improvements. I know that the director of the unit and her colleagues have consulted widely during their work.

The unit has seen a number of written proposals, including a consultant's report commissioned by the Department of Health, to which my hon. Friend referred. I am glad that he has already met the director and put his views to her on these matters. All that will inform the unit's review of the strategy, which will be published later this year. I am sure that there are lessons to be learned from some of the local initiatives in place such as the excellent work being done by the drugs task group in west Suffolk. The way in which that group is seeking to mobilise the whole community to fight the problem of drug misuse is one of the features underpinning the Home Office's drug prevention programme.

The initiative ensures that people are properly informed, encouraged and supported in their resistance to drug misuse. Since being launched in 1990, the 20 local drug prevention teams have been working with local agencies and communities to find effective ways of preventing the spread of drug misuse and considering how effective local action can be organised with the aim of enabling drugs prevention to become a self-sustaining activity. One of the assumptions made very early on was that if all the many social and other influences on people at risk could be marshalled, organised and concentrated, there would be a very much better chance of making a lasting community impact on the incidence of the problem.

The local teams were placed in areas—mostly urban—which were known to have drugs problems. As we know, other areas, including rural areas, have drugs problems, too. Our aim is to use the experience of the 20 areas with teams to learn what works best and how we may find the best way forward in community-based drugs prevention.

There is little doubt that the solution to the problem of drugs misuse, wherever it occurs, is neither straightforward nor short term. The drug prevention teams have supported more than 1,000 projects in an attempt to ensure that the community is properly informed, encouraged and supported in its resistance to drugs misuse. The emphasis is on stopping young people taking drugs in the first place, and on getting them to stop if they have already started.

There is some evidence of success. Independent reviews have shown that good progress has been made in providing preventive action that is strong, consistent and well co-ordinated. It is, however, too soon to say whether there has been a long-term, lasting impact. Only time will tell. But, in the meantime, the effort must continue and develop. So we shall make an announcement soon about the future of the drugs prevention initiative and how we intend to develop from the start that has already been made.

We should also recognise the importance of the availability of effective treatment services. We need a comprehensive range of locally based services for drug misusers, from detoxification and counselling to after care and rehabilitation. Specific funding has been made available to health authorities as a contribution towards the costs incurred in developing such services. This amounts in total in England to more than £25 million for 1994-95. My hon. Friend will be interested to know that, of this, more than £1 million has been allocated to health authorities in the East Anglian area, of which £125,000 has so far been allocated to Suffolk health authority.

My right hon. Friend the Minister for Health announced this month a review of treatment services for drug misusers. The aim is to determine how effective such services are in helping misusers achieve drug-free life styles and reduce drug misuse and the harm associated with it. The review will be conducted by a task force chaired by the Rev. Dr. John Polkinghorne, President of Queens' college Cambridge, and it is due to report next year.

My hon. Friend raised several other points in his wide-ranging review. As he said, legalisation of drugs is proposed from time to time as a solution to the drug problem. I was pleased to hear my hon. Friend declare his opposition to any such proposal. There is in any case little or no support for it in the international community. A recent meeting of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs adopted a resolution which urged Governments not to derogate from full implementation of the international drug control treaty and to continue strictly to limit the use of narcotic drugs to medical and scientific purposes. The Government agree with my hon. Friend. We believe that legalisation would simply lead to wider misuse.

I readily accept my hon. Friend's point about the need for effective international co-operation in the fight against drugs. We attach great importance to that element in our strategy. The Government also recognise the need to deter international drug traffickers and dealers by providing the courts with maximum penalties and depriving offenders of the proceeds of their crimes. The maximum sentence for trafficking in class A drugs such as heroin or cocaine is life imprisonment. United Kingdom laws for getting at the profits of drug dealers are among the toughest in the world. We have negotiated bilateral agreements with 30 countries to facilitate the confiscation of assets.

My hon. Friend also mentioned the problem of glue sniffing. As he has said, parents must warn their children of the dangers and watch out for the warning signs of misuse. The campaign to which my hon. Friend referred was launched at a cost of £5 million in January of this year by the Department of Health. The publicity material is designed to encourage and help parents to talk to their

children about drugs and solvents. So far, more than 1 million copies of the booklet "Drugs and Solvents—Why You and Your Child" have been issued.

We recognise that, as my hon. Friend says, the education service has a vital part to play in ensuring that young people are made aware of the harmful effects of drugs and are equipped with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that they need to resist pressure to use or misuse them.

Until comparatively recently, drug education in schools was very much an optional extra. However, under the provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988, all maintained schools are now required to provide education about drugs as part of the national curriculum.

I noted my hon. Friend's concern about drug misuse in prison as a result of his visit to Highpoint prison in Suffolk. I assure him that the Prison Service takes the problem extremely seriously and has made reducing drug misuse one of its major corporate objectives. It is developing a strategy that will tackle problems associated with both reducing the supply of and demand for drugs. The strategy will also involve improving the provision of treatment for prisoners during their sentences and the treatment and support being carried through on their release to the community. New measures in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill will also allow testing of prisoners' urine. We believe that that will act as a deterrent to those tempted to use drugs while inside.

Finally, on workplace drug testing, my hon. Friend mentioned those employers who feel that their business demands it. They have already used the opportunity afforded by collective or individual bargaining to introduce testing provisions into contracts of employment. I am sure that that development is to be welcomed. The Department of Employment recommends that any testing be done in the framework of a policy that aims to rehabilitate misusers and prevent risks to others from their actions.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising this important matter. I hope that what I have been able to say in response has given him some encouragement, for there is a great deal to be done, as he made so clear in his speech.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nineteen minutes to Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 6 May 1994

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

BILL PRESENTED

WATER CHARGES (AMENDMENT) (No. 2)

Mr. Paul Tyler, supported by Mr. A. J. Beith, Mr. Matthew Taylor, Mr. Nick Harvey, Mr. Don Foster, Mr. Simon Hughes and Diana Maddock, presented a Bill to amend the Water Industry Act 1991 to prohibit the use by water undertakers of rateable values as a basis for charging from 31st March 1995; to provide for charging by water undertakers in accordance with council tax bands; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 15 July, and to be printed. [Bill 106.]

Points of Order

9.34 am

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I wonder whether you have received any assurances from the appropriate Minister in relation to the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, as there was a unanimous vote in the House last week which ordered the Government to give adequate time to allow that Bill to be approved and placed on the statute book. The Bill would give equal rights to millions of disabled people up and down the country.

In view of the unusual situation that developed last week—it was the first time in my 24 years in this place that I have seen such a motion passed—and in view of those instructions, have you been assured by the Minister that the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill will be given time by the Government so that it reaches the statute book and provides those rights for all those citizens?

Madam Speaker: It is not normal practice for the Speaker to be assured by the Government on any issue of that nature. It is for the House to determine whether the Bill proceeds speedily through the House today when we arrive at that particular point.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. As you have often told us, you are the protector of Back-Bench interests which means that you are the protector of the interests of a constituency to have a Back-Bench Member of Parliament. Can you tell us when you will take the view that there is no further point in the Government's running away from a by-election in Eastleigh which should have been held by now?

The Government have now been destroyed in the local elections, and particularly in the local elections in Eastleigh, and it is time that they had the courage to face the electorate in a by-election there.

Madam Speaker: I am well aware that election campaigning has been going on for some time outside the House as well as inside it. However, as Speaker, I am certainly not going to be dragged into any campaigning.

Orders of the Day

Chiropractors Bill

Not amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New clause 3

DEATH OF A CHIROPRACTOR

'. On registering the death of a registered chiropractor, a registrar of births and deaths shall send forthwith by post to the Registrar a copy certified under his hand of the entry relating to the death in the register of deaths; and the cost of the certificate and of sending it by post shall be payable by the Registrar to the registrar of births and deaths from whom it is received.'—*[Mr. Spring.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Richard Spring (Bury St. Edmunds): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause duplicates the provisions that obtain in the Opticians Act 1958. It would place a duty on a registrar of births and deaths to notify the Registrar of Chiropractors in any case when the death of a registered chiropractor was recorded. That would lower the risk of fraudulent use of a deceased chiropractor's identity.

When dealing with the spine, someone who is perpetrating a fraud can do considerable damage. There must be protection. We are aware of a mental disorder whereby people choose to masquerade as doctors or surgeons. That disorder has been well reported. As opticians deal with a delicate part of the body, they have sought to use a provision which I believe should now be applied to chiropractic. Opticians have sought to protect their patients from exposure to risk and injury and I believe that chiropractors would, through the Bill, wish to do the same.

The Bill specifically contains a provision to prevent fraud. New clause 3 seeks to ensure that the identity of a deceased chiropractor cannot be used to achieve registration by fraudulent means. As registration and the raising of the quality of professionalism of chiropractors is at the very heart of the Bill, I believe that the provision is important.

There is also a simple human aspect to the provision. For the family of a deceased person, it would stop the distress caused by the family continuing to receive, for some time, telephone calls or letters after the death of that person. Of course, the General Chiropractic Council would not be guilty of such an error.

The new clause would bring chiropractors into line with another respected group of medical professionals—the opticians. It would bring about good practice, which all of us want to see and which is at the heart of the Bill.

Stealing other people's identities has become big business. We know that it happens in the criminal world, with the stealing of passports; stealing other people's identities has become a big business among the criminal fraternity. People have stolen the identities of people of comparable age to very negative effect. When we are dealing with health issues, we must ensure that such fraud does not happen and that we protect the public against it.

All of us who have had chiropractic treatment know that in the process of manipulation, there is a delicate balance to be achieved in relieving stiffness and tension in the spine. If it is not done professionally, it can lead to considerable damage. The Bill, in ensuring a proper register to give people the assurance that properly trained and recognised individuals will be the only practitioners, requires the new clause. It would prevent frauds from being perpetrated, with all the unhappy consequences. It would remove the threat of a false identity being assumed after the death of a chiropractor.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring) for tabling the new clause, although I have several points to make about it. There are, of course, already many ways in which the Bill, as drafted, would ensure that the good character and suitability of chiropractors was recognised. There are many safeguards in it to ensure that—

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Is the Minister aware that the best way of helping people with spinal difficulties today in this House is to be as quick as possible in dealing with this Bill to get on to the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, which otherwise will be endangered?

Mr. Sackville: A new clause has been tabled and I have to put the Government's view, which I shall do as briefly as I can. There are many provisions in the Bill that would prevent the fraudulent registration of a chiropractor. In the very unlikely event that the whole process, as contained in the Bill, were bypassed, there would be other factors at work which would make the new clause unnecessary.

There is a published register of chiropractors, which is an extract from the main register. If a colleague died, it is very unlikely that members of this close-knit profession would not become aware of that death. There are newsletters and all sorts of ways in which the death would become apparent.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): My hon. Friend will be aware that the Bill would set up quite a bureaucracy, with a large council of 19 members to look after 900 people. Will my hon. Friend comment on the fact that the new clause would place obligations and, presumably, costs on the registrar of births and deaths?

Mr. Sackville: Indeed, the new clause is unnecessarily regulatory. It would add nothing to the security of registration of the profession. The most likely source of a fraudulent registration would be the death of an overseas chiropractor after which someone passed himself off as that person and set up in practice. We have no assurance that the new clause would prevent that from happening. The new clause is unnecessary and adds nothing to what is already in the Bill. I therefore advise the House to reject it.

Mr. Spring: In view of what my hon. Friend has said, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 2

THE REGISTRAR OF CHIROPRACTORS

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): We now come to amendment No. 9, with which it will be convenient to take amendment No. 8. I call Mr. Spring.

Mr. Spring *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring) clearly has no intention of moving the amendment. He is simply wasting the House's time. I urge you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to move on to the next business.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It seemed to me that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds had risen in his place. He is assembling his notes and I imagine that he is now ready to move the amendment.

Mr. Spring: I beg to move amendment No. 9, in page 2, line 18, at end insert—

'(1A) The General Council shall not appoint a person under subsection (1) unless he is a qualified solicitor or is otherwise legally qualified.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take amendment No. 8, in page 2, line 35, at end insert—

'(7) The General Council shall appoint a person to be deputy to the Registrar; and a person so appointed shall be known as the Deputy Registrar, shall hold office for such period and on such terms as the General Council may determine and shall exercise such functions (including, in particular, the function of deputising for the Registrar when the Registrar is absent or otherwise unable to act) as the General Council may determine.'.

9.45 am

Mr. Spring: The amendment proposes that the general council should not appoint a person under subsection (1) unless he is a qualified solicitor or otherwise legally qualified. Hon. Members know that we have a superabundance of lawyers here. We may be tempted, therefore, to think that we do not need any more lawyers to be involved in any proceedings. However, the fact is that the amendment—

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Does the hon. Gentleman realise the fatuousness of the amendment? The registrar of the General Medical Council has never been a qualified lawyer. This is the most absurd, time-wasting nonsense.

Mr. Spring: If the hon. and learned Gentleman will wait a moment, he will hear me discuss this point and why it is important to consider it.

Mr. Knapman: Will my hon. Friend consider the point that the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) has already made points of order and interventions, and has taken up far more of the House's time than has any other hon. Member present? With respect, that is not in any way unusual—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let us be clear. Hon. Members have the right to be heard in the House. We have a Bill before us and we have amendments that are in order. As long as amendments are moved—this one is being moved—the House must listen. I am not prepared to listen to sedentary comments from certain quarters of the House any further this morning.

Mr. Spring: The point is that the amendment would ensure that the general council had someone who was legally qualified and with an appropriate breadth of knowledge; knowledge of the law would be helpful. Through the Bill, we are trying to upgrade the reputation of chiropractors. We have looked at the whole question of health, and at the whole question of raising the professionalism of chiropractors and their recognition in the community. It is now important that someone who is at the centre of the process should be legally qualified.

We live in a time of considerable litigation against individuals who practise various forms of medicine, whether complementary medicine, veterinary medicine or any other kind. It is important, therefore, that the individual who is at the centre of the general council should have knowledge of the law. That would be extremely helpful to members of the chiropractic profession. Given the nature of society and the potential for law suits, an understanding of the law would be extremely helpful.

The amendment would achieve something else. It would strengthen the feeling among those who use chiropractors, of whom there are an increasing number, that there is someone centrally placed who understands what the law is about. I believe that that presents a valid safeguard.

Chiropractors have been around for almost 100 years, but it is only now that the medical profession is accepting them as a form of complementary medicine. Therefore, it would be helpful to assist the encouragement of general practitioners and the general public to accept them by making sure that the individual who supervises and regulates the profession has a knowledge of the law. That would be useful and important, especially in view of the history of chiropractic in Britain. After all, the registrar maintains the register of chiropractors and fulfils other duties placed on him by the general council.

As I said, people may laugh about the superabundance of lawyers in the House or outside, but the fact remains that in every aspect of our national life, knowledge of the law is becoming increasingly important. We are an increasingly litigious society. People who may be dissatisfied, for example, with the service that they receive from chiropractors will have the assurance that the person at the heart of the regulatory organisation has a profound knowledge of the law. That is why I have moved the amendment.

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): While I am sure that my hon. Friend has good intentions, I hope that, on consideration, he will withdraw his amendment. If he does not, I shall ask the House to reject it.

There are three reasons why the amendment is unnecessary. First, the post of registrar will encompass not simply giving legal advice to the general council but a range of administrative and executive tasks, not all of which require legal experience.

Secondly, conditions of employment are already subject to the decision of the general council, which is, in turn, subject to the Privy Council. If the general council feels that a lawyer is the best candidate for the job, it has the right to appoint one, but it should not be prevented by statute from appointing a non-lawyer if that person is the best candidate for the job.

Mr. Knapman: Will my hon. Friend expand a little on why the Privy Council should select members instead of the Secretary of State, who could be questioned in this place?

Mr. Lidington: It is simply a matter of following the precedent of other self-regulating medical professions. We have followed the procedure under the Osteopaths Act 1993 and that for the General Medical Council.

[Mr. Lidington]

The third reason why the clause is unnecessary is that the Bill provides for the general council to appoint expert legal assessors. That is a duty of the general council under the Bill. Therefore, the general council and the registrar will have expert legal advice available to them without the need for the amendment.

Amendment No. 8 refers to the deputy registrar. It is not a sensible use of legislation to provide for every eventuality. The Bill allows the general council to appoint and employ staff in addition to the registrar. It will almost certainly need to do so and it should be left to the council's discretion.

Mr. Sackville: I should like to respond. The amendment has been tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring). I can certainly understand the reasons behind it. There is no doubt that a legal training is of enormous importance in many administrative functions, but the amendment is probably over-prescriptive. The general council should be allowed the freedom to decide who is the best candidate. Therefore, I advise the House to reject the amendment.

I have no wish to denigrate the legal profession, which is well represented on both sides of the House. I think that the only reason why I had the honour of being selected for my seat was that the boundary changes to the Bolton, West constituency failed to penetrate the inner recesses of the Inner Temple back in 1983.

The system of regulation, as seen first in the Osteopaths Act 1993, which is reflected in the Bill, marks a fresh approach to professional self-regulation. That is central to the reason why I advise the House to reject my hon. Friend's amendment. There will be no well-established precedents set to guide decisions. To a great extent, the general council would have to advance across unknown territory. The same point could easily be made in connection with the post and duties of the registrar, who will arguably be the second most important post in the statutory scheme, after the chairman of the general council.

It would clearly be in the interests of the profession and the general council to ensure, for example, that the person appointed was conversant with both the legal obligations arising out of the scheme and the particular challenges presented by the administrative requirements of a health profession.

I also have some worries about the impression that might be created if the duties of the registrar were seen as purely legalistic. The post of registrar, who is responsible for the direction of the general council, has considerable flexibility. If the post was always filled by a person with a legal qualification, it might be expected that his duties were primarily legalistic. I am sure that that is not the overall intention of the Bill. Indeed, the amendment calls into question the requirement in clause 27 to appoint legal assessors to provide advice to the registrar, in addition to the various statutory committees.

I do not wish to imply that a lawyer could not fill the post effectively, but I am sure that many other individuals would also be eminently suitable. Therefore, to restrict the appointment to a lawyer would place a significant limit on the council's freedom of action and arbitrarily rule out of contention many candidates who would be suitable. Therefore, I do not believe that the amendment would serve a particularly useful purpose.

The general council would be able to appoint a lawyer if it thought that such a person was the most suitable. There would be little to be gained and, in my opinion, something to be lost in making the post of registrar a closed shop. It would cut across the self-regulatory nature of the scheme that lies at the heart of the Bill and has been shown to be successful in the Osteopaths Act, which was passed by the House last year.

The principle of statutory regulation implies that Parliament entrusts that profession with its own regulation and development. In the case of the chiropractic profession, that is a suitable way of doing it. For that reason, we have not sought to incorporate every last detail in the Bill. We must leave the profession a lot of room for discretion and to find out what requirements it will have in practice.

At first sight, it might be said that amendment No. 8, which refers to the deputy registrar, seems sensible, but, again, it is overly prescriptive. That amendment and the imposition of the need for a lawyer to serve as registrar are both proposals which I would advise the House to reject.

Mr. Spring: In view of my hon. Friend's comments, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Order for Third Reading read.

9.58 am

Mr. Lidington: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

The contents of the Bill have been fully discussed in previous stages and I shall not add anything to what has been said. However, I wish to take a few minutes, for reasons that I have discussed with the hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry), to dwell on the future of the chiropractic profession and to respond to some serious anxieties expressed by members of the profession during the Bill's progress through the House.

The chiropractic profession sought statutory regulation and its ardent advocacy persuaded me to take up the Bill in the first place. The profession has aimed to ensure high standards for patients and to protect its good name against any possibility of infiltration by quacks and charlatans, taking advantage of the increasing popularity of chiropractic among patients. The third aim has been to bring chiropractic still closer to the mainstream of medicine and to make it more trusted by doctors, by virtue of statutory protection and the assurance of common standards of competence and training.

The various voluntary associations pulled together to campaign for the Bill through the chiropractic registration steering group. I congratulate the group on its work. The co-operation between different schools of chiropractic and mutual respect among chiropractors from the different schools are encouraging signs for the future. I hope that the profession will continue along that road.

If the Bill is enacted—I hope that it will be—the role of those voluntary associations is bound to change. In the short term, the profession could still determine certain things collectively; it might draw up standards of proficiency based on existing competency, of a standard common to the various chiropractic schools, and it could draft a shared code of professional ethics.

It is important for the profession to beware trying to judge matters that will become the proper responsibility of the general council if the Bill is enacted. Under the Bill, the

general council will have the responsibility of setting professional and educational standards for the entire profession.

I will give the House a practical example. Some years ago, the various voluntary associations agreed that all chiropractic schools should achieve common standards within five years of any statutory system of regulation coming into force. The standard was that set by the European Council on Chiropractic Education—as it existed in 1991.

Today, we find that the Anglo-European college in Bournemouth is the only school in Europe, let alone the United Kingdom, to meet that standard, so the Bournemouth standard could be said to be the gold standard for chiropractic. It would be wrong to assume, however, that the Bournemouth standard must be taken as the minimum standard throughout the chiropractic profession, whatever may happen.

The general council, representing the entire profession, must set the standard of professional education, to protect the interests of patients and the reputation of the profession alike. Those standards and the type of courses that will train students to meet them are bound to change as medicine and chiropractic techniques develop and evolve. That is why no educational standard is described in the Bill. Instead, that task is rightly left to the general council and the education committee when the Bill becomes law, as we hope it will.

Recognition of qualifications should be based on the outcome of training—not on the process by which training is carried out—and the standards achieved. There is, therefore, no reason in principle why some courses should not continue to be part time, to include distance learning or to be of any duration. The key is that every course should meet the standards of proficiency laid down by the general council for safe and competent chiropractic practice.

Like the King's Fund working party, I believe that the initial standards of proficiency will need to reflect existing standards in the profession. That will ensure that the profession moves forward together from a basis founded on the reality of practice and not on a vision of what it might or ought to be like in the future—a future which, because of developments in chiropractic and medicine, could be impossible to predict with certainty.

The general council should be free to adopt a dynamic strategy based on its assessment of the present needs of the profession. It should not be constrained to a rigid commitment to a standard that it played no part in drawing up and which might be out of date when the relevant decisions have to be made.

The intention behind the voluntary agreement between chiropractic associations remains as valid as ever and it is embodied in my Bill. The intention is to provide a guarantee to the profession, the public and patients that standards will not simply be maintained, but will rise and be encouraged to rise.

Some chiropractors may exceed the standards set by the general council. That is welcome and it is only to be expected. No chiropractor will be penalised for being ahead of the game. Such a chiropractor may have much to offer his or her colleagues when the general council introduces rules on the supervision of professionally registered chiropractors in due course. The profession will be able gradually to achieve its long-term goal to raise standards across the board by a process of evolution.

The voluntary associations may well continue. Indeed, it is important that they should do so and that chiropractors should continue to belong to them, at least until the register is opened. In that way, we will ensure a smooth transition from a voluntary to a statutory scheme.

The role of the voluntary associations is bound to change, however, and the general council will take over many of their functions. If the Bill is successful, the council will be the means by which all chiropractors are represented and by which they will represent themselves to others. All members of the general council will be required to act as ambassadors for the profession and to set aside previous loyalties to the school where they were trained or the voluntary association to which they belonged. All registered chiropractors will owe a duty of professional respect to their registered colleagues, similar to the duty and respect owed to colleagues in a voluntary association at present.

If the progress that the associations have already made, by gradually working together and harmonising their approaches, is continued and consolidated, the general council will find it increasingly easy to take up and perform its statutory duties, which can only be in the interests of the chiropractic profession and the patients it serves.

Throughout proceedings on the Bill, I have been heartened by the support that I have received from all quarters of the House. I must also place on record my thanks to the schools of chiropractic, to many chiropractors and to patients who have given up their time to discuss with me the challenges facing the profession.

I have been enormously impressed by the dedication of chiropractors in this country and by their commitment to serving their patients and enhancing the standing of their profession. I have also been impressed by their optimism and their constructive approach towards the development of chiropractic in the United Kingdom. I wish the profession well and I commend the Bill to the House.

10.7 am

Mr. Hinchliffe: I apologise for the absence of my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo), who has led for the Opposition during the Bill's previous stages. Unfortunately, she had a constituency commitment that she could not avoid. The Opposition made clear their full support for the measure during the previous stages.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South spoke for a mere six minutes on Second Reading and for less than one minute in Committee. I shall follow her example in terms of brevity, not least because of the Opposition's strong desire to see the measure on the statute book and also because I am a sponsor of the Bill that the House is to discuss next which was introduced by hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry).

The House and the public will not forgive any hon. Member who attempts to delay this measure as a way of wrecking my hon. Friend's Bill. Hon. Members would do well to look at examples of what has happened to Members of this place who have attempted to wreck the measure. I assure any hon. Members with those intentions that we will do all in our power to ensure that their constituents are well aware of their activities.

On behalf of the Opposition, I am happy to support the Bill and I wish it well.

10.9 am

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): I offer a warm welcome to the Bill and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) on his success. I was proud to serve on the Standing Committee that examined the Bill for one special reason: one of the leading chiropractors in the country, Dr. Brian Hammond, is based in my constituency. I have heard from his many patients and others within the community what an absolute blessing chiropractic treatment has been to them and it therefore follows that that treatment should be offered proper recognition. That is what the Bill is designed to achieve.

In the past few decades, an enormous amount of progress has been made because the medical world now accepts that complementary medicine has a role to play. It has been heartening to note that the national health service, which was hesitant in supporting complementary medicine, is now offering whole-hearted support for chiropractic treatment. In many cases, people who have gone to see their doctor and sought treatment from conventional medicines in hospital have been advised to seek the help of a chiropractor and found immediate relief.

The practice in Sutton is of such stature that it has treated 16,000 people in about 15 years, which works out at an average of around 500 people a week. The numbers treated demonstrates the important role that chiropractic treatment has in medicine today, especially when we bear in mind the misery that back pain can cause. Although chiropractors treat all forms of pain, their treatment is particularly beneficial for those suffering from back pain. The chiropractor registrar noted earlier this year that 310,000 people in Britain alone are off work each day with back pain. It is estimated that back pain costs the country £3 billion in lost production every year. Those figures speak for themselves and reveal how important it is that chiropractors should be properly recognised and have their own general council.

With the compilation of a formal register, chiropractors will be able to ensure that rogue practitioners will be prevented from registering. That will stop patients or potential patients being put at serious risk. Dr. Brian Hammond has told me of several people who came along to him in great pain having first been treated by a rogue practitioner. The Bill will regulate an important part of what I call the medical profession and I therefore give it a warm welcome.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury on his tremendous determination to push the Bill through. When his chance came up in the ballot, he selected a Bill that went right to the back pain of Britain, the heart of Britain. His Bill will offer tremendous relief to many people who have always felt that their source of medical help has been on the fringes of medicine. It will now be within the heart of it.

10.13 am

Mr. John Sykes (Scarborough): I support the Bill, which my hon. Friend for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington), has promoted because, in 1978, I obtained my class 1 heavy goods vehicle licence—I must be one of the only hon. Members to have done so—and I know full well what driving long hours can do to one's back. I also support the Bill because, last year, I had the privilege to serve on the Standing Committee that considered the Osteopaths Bill, which has served that profession well.

Whether by hard work, subtle diplomacy, opportune timing or a combination of all those factors, a variety of interested organisations have come together in recent months to debate the statutory regulation of the chiropractic profession in a rare atmosphere of accord. On those grounds alone, there is much to commend.

A sea change in the opinion of the British Medical Association towards alternative and complementary medicine has come about. For some time, surveys have reported positive findings concerning the efficacy of complementary medicine. The nation's health care system is under a period of intense scrutiny and either the nation is turning progressively spineless or, as a result of what appears to be a series of amazing coincidences, complementary medicine is enjoying greater public confidence than at any other time. Chiropractic treatment is experiencing not so much a fad as a boom.

Of the 310,000 people who are off work each day because of back pain, 75,000 receive weekly chiropractic treatment. In a previous debate on the Bill, my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) said that it cost £20 per hour for treatment at the National Back Pain Association in her constituency. If one takes that rate as a hypothetical mean rate, the chiropractic profession starts to turn from a strand of complementary medicine into a multi-million pound industry. That alone is not, however, a sufficient reason for the statutory regulation of chiropractic.

The 75,000 people who receive weekly chiropractic treatment are administered to by 900 practitioners, who are qualified in a variety of ways and registered by a number of voluntary bodies. The size of the chiropractic profession and the volume of its work have outgrown the voluntary status that was a perfectly satisfactory means of self-regulation for many years. The arrangements are in need of review at least, if not statutory regulation as the Bill proposes.

The chiropractic registration steering group has calculated that 310,000 people are off work each day through back pain and that that costs the country £3 billion annually in lost production. That is undesirable and the problem could be greatly relieved by the statutory regulation contained in the Bill.

With the debate on the future of the NHS and social security provision continuing to roll on, the remaining stages of the Bill should take account of the important fact that it is no longer taken for granted that traditional forms of treatment are more effective than complementary medicine, although they are often considerably more expensive.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Sykes: No, I must make progress.

The successful passage of the Bill so far perhaps results from the fact that its origins lie in an initiative started within the chiropractic profession.

Mr. Hinchliffe: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for Government Whips to supply briefing material to Government Back Benchers, who have not shown the slightest interest in the Bill's previous stages? They have done so in an attempt to block the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, promoted by my hon.

Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry). I witnessed the hon. Member for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes) being supplied with briefing material on Tuesday by the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes). The hon. Member for Scarborough has not shown a scrap of interest in the Bill before now and his speech is a disgraceful attempt to delay business and block the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That has absolutely nothing to do with the Chair.

Mr. Sykes: That was an unworthy point of order, but it was entirely in keeping with the stature of the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) in the House. He obviously was not listening to the start of my speech, when I said quite clearly that I served on the Standing Committee that considered the Osteopaths Bill last year. Every day 310,000 suffer from back pain; there are as many people who suffer from back pain as there are disabled and they should have their say.

The successful passage of the Bill so far perhaps results from the fact that its origins lie with an initiative started within the chiropractic profession. The Bill is not a coercive measure or an unpopular one. It has support through the chiropractic profession and enjoys cross-party support in the House.

The prestigious King's Fund management committee, impressed by the co-operation that it saw from all the different parts of the chiropractic profession, decided to set up a working party to investigate the possibility of statutory regulation. It found in favour. The report, provided under the auspices of its chairman, Sir Thomas Bingham, has subsequently provided much of the substance and thought behind my hon. Friend's Bill.

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Sykes: I have already said that I will not give way.

Mr. Austin-Walker: What is the hon. Gentleman afraid of?

Mr. Sykes: The hon. Member wants to proceed to discuss the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, but I want to conclude my remarks on the Chiropractors Bill.

It is perhaps unnecessary to stress the intellectual and philosophical pedigree behind the Bill, because, as has often been said during its passage, the popularity and confidence that the profession enjoy among the public are now indisputable. The Bill is not merely concerned with legislating for a flash-in-the-pan fad. A huge change has occurred in the attitude of the medical disciplines towards alternative and complementary medicine. As the number of people receiving treatment continues to rise, so does the number of referrals from orthodox doctors, a theme to which I shall return in a moment.

At times like this, it is tempting to resort to the old adage,

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

However, statutory registration will prolong the smooth running of chiropractic treatment. Indicative of that truth are the lengths to which the various chiropractic bodies went to gain agreement about the setting of common standards for education and training of chiropractors. The chiropractic registration steering group dismissed all professional jealousy and competitiveness to gain agreement that, within five years of legislation coming into force, all schools of chiropractic in the United Kingdom would have minimum standards in accordance with those set down by the European Council on Chiropractic Education.

The other measures that my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury has chosen for inclusion in his Bill are indicative of the same need for statutory regulation. Through the creation of a General Chiropractic Council, as recommended in the King's Fund report, and a group of four subsidiary committees, a sophisticated self-governing watchdog system can be put in place. That is of major concern to the profession, whose method of treatment could be highly dangerous in the hands of the unqualified.

The general council will regulate, develop and promote chiropractic treatment. The subsidiary groups will form layers of defence against potential abuse and provide breadth of expertise, which will ensure that the profession has a solid and legitimate basis from which to meet the increased demands that the future is likely to bring.

The Bill seeks to bring reassurance to patient and practitioner alike. Statutory regulation would offer reassurance to the patient that the registered practitioner was properly qualified. The obligation to retrain will further ensure that reassurance. The Bill will give the practitioner official recognition and respectability, which can only improve the chances of a member of the profession playing a more integral role in the health care system of the nation.

In the light of the recent debate about deregulation, it can also be assured that provisions of the Bill show a laudable tendency for self-government. The financial onus of the general council is placed entirely on the shoulders of the profession through subscription rates, except where the Privy Council is required to intervene, and the work of the general council and its committees is prescribed to be proactive and progressive.

The incorporation of alternative and complementary medicine into mainstream UK health care has been helped by a number of changes of perception in established views. An especially influential article, with vast implications, was a study published in the *British Medical Journal* in 1990 and conducted by the Medical Research Council. It found that in a comparative study of the treatment received in hospital through traditional medicine with the treatment received from chiropractors, only one of the 11 hospital centres could claim to perform better than chiropractors. There was an insignificant difference between the performance of two sets of the other centres and chiropractors, although the study found that 741 patients studied between the ages of 18 and 65 received "significantly more effective" treatment from chiropractors than from eight of the hospitals.

Chiropractic is, in many such ways, receiving greater attention and recognition for its successful treatment of what is now a widespread problem—back-related ailments. Some of the hon. Members in the House today are still worried about the extent to which complementary medicine will be made available on the national health service, especially those medicines that are to be, or have been, statutorily regulated.

I believe that that is merely a case of counting chickens. Before chiropractic is incorporated completely into established patterns of health care, it must first achieve statutory recognition. It must then be allowed a period of assessment, to discern the true extent of its need.

[Mr. Sykes]

A more prescient question might be about the way in which a proportion of the 60 million working days are lost each year as a result of back pain could be recovered. Schemes for chiropractic treatment at the workplace, which the Minister outlined during the previous debate, represent only one response to that large problem.

Far from exhibiting

"a reversion to primitive beliefs",

as the BMA thought as recently as 1976, complementary medicine could contain many answers to our anxieties about welfare expenditure. My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam believes that there are savings to be made. On Second Reading, she said that she believed that £13 million could be saved in lost output and £2.5 million in social security payments, against an additional cost of about £4 million from the introduction of chiropractic in the national health service.

Various pithy guidelines were produced during the previous debate to illustrate the readiness of the chiropractic profession to receive statutory regulation. It must now be obvious to all that that is the case. Likewise, I believe that the Bill in its present state is more than ready for statutory recognition and hence I commend it to the House.

10.23 am

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): Like hon. Members who spoke earlier, I welcome the Bill and want it to be brought into force as soon as possible. I recognise the importance of chiropractic to many people who are disabled by severe back and other pain, but there is no dispute in the House about the importance of the Bill and the importance of its coming into law.

No debate is necessary on the Bill and I hope that, after this long debate, the House will recognise that the tactics of the Conservative Members are not to add anything to the Chiropractors Bill. They intend to block the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, which would bring benefit to millions of disabled people in the country.

10.24 am

Mr. Spring: I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) on successfully sponsoring the Bill, and on presenting his case so admirably at every stage.

Although, 20 years on, the BMA remains agnostic about complementary medicine, I have a personal observation to make. About 20 years ago, when I started working, I had an injury which resulted in the most appalling headache. I visited countless doctors and specialists, none of whom could find anything wrong. Therefore, I speak with considerable feeling when I say that a chiropractor solved that problem. I am not alone in that. It was an appalling experience of six months of considerable pain.

Complementary medicine has been brought substantially into the main stream and I welcome the fact that the cure of pain through chiropractic can be achieved without the use of pills, which have become a considerable problem in our country. In the old days, chiropractic and osteopathy were considered to be off-beam and eccentric. They were unloved and held in deep suspicion.

On a final personal note, when I telephoned my doctor to say that I had got rid of that excruciating pain via manipulation of the spine, he was horrified. I do not believe that today a general practitioner would react in that way.

The thrust of the Bill, therefore, is to recognise the achievements of chiropractors by upgrading their reputation and giving them the professional status that they deserve because they have helped so many people such as myself.

Increasingly, medicine takes an holistic view of people. We know that illness can be psychosomatic in many respects, but we know that the spine is the conduit for the nervous system and can have an impact on the immune system. Indeed, the huge volume of back pain which is so noteworthy of contemporary Britain is increasingly treated by chiropractors without recourse to tranquillisers.

Last night, I initiated an Adjournment debate about substance abuse. One aspect of substance abuse that is an increasing problem in this country is the overuse of tranquillisers and painkillers. That is where alternative medicine has an important part to play.

In my constituency a few months ago, I visited the Bury St. Edmunds chiropractic practice and met an elderly gentleman, who had for years been in agony and was now being successfully treated. He wanted me to see the treatment that he had been undertaking. Increasingly, GPs and chiropractors work hand in glove. It is no coincidence that, in my constituency, the Bury chiropractic practice is now cheek by jowl with a new GP's surgery. I believe that that is the way for the future.

In the past 20 years, there has been a sea change. People live longer. Better health is expected. However, as a result of rising living standards and people's desire for good health, the risk of the charlatan remains. One only has to read newspapers and magazines that discuss health to read the names of countless individuals offering therapies, hypnotism and so on. There is an explosion in such treatments, which are beneficial in many respects as part of complementary medicine, but also have their dangers. That is why the Bill is so important in creating parameters for the professionalism of chiropractors.

The Medical Research Council, during a two-year trial, gave complete credence to the use of chiropractic in returning patients to good health. The medical profession, in contrast with 15 to 20 years ago, is no longer dismissive. Increasingly, younger doctors take an admirable holistic approach. Clinics offering complementary medicine are increasing and are working closely with the existing medical profession.

The chief executive of the King's fund said that complementary medicine should be regulated and recognised by statute, provided that it met three important criteria. First, it should rest on a solid professional basis with knowledge and skills that could be examined. All hon. Members would agree with that. Secondly, it should be able to cure pain by any objective assessment. We know that chiropractors can achieve that. Thirdly, there should be a public demand for it. The public require a proper understanding and feeling of security, and the difference between good and bad practice should be made clear. Publicly accountable self-regulation is, therefore, part and parcel of that.

The Bill appears properly to fulfil those themes. It gives assurance to the public and greater self confidence to the profession; it weeds out the charlatans; and the general council will be self financing. We are not discussing some

overweening new statutory body that is introducing a host of unwelcome legislation, full of bureaucratic intent. As my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes) said, 75,000 people a week visit chiropractors. However, there are only 900 chiropractors in Britain and, considering the demand and the good that they do, that number is inadequate.

With a proper status and self-regulating framework, GPs and the public will increasingly accept the profession. The increased number of GP fundholders using complementary medicine will undoubtedly attract further people. I welcome the fact that the Bill itself will attract people to become chiropractors, given the shortage that exists.

In 1975, the British Chiropractic Association applied unsuccessfully for inclusion as one of the professions regulated under the Professions Supplementary to Medicine Act 1960. At that time, there was a division about the way forward for the profession, born largely of a contradictory self image. As a result of the Bill, that will no longer be the case. Complementary medicine is in place and the General Chiropractic Council will give it form and structure.

A poll conducted by *The Times* and MORI showed that 93 per cent. of those consulting a chiropractor were satisfied with their treatment. I doubt whether many professions in Britain enjoy that level of satisfaction and acceptance, despite the fact that, hitherto, anybody could call himself or herself a chiropractor. Despite the high satisfaction, those who were unsatisfied could have recourse under common law alone, which is an important point. The additional assurance of proper registration and regulation of the profession springs directly from the Bill, under which the General Chiropractic Council can decide whether to introduce disciplinary proceedings. I welcome that arms'-length principle.

The Bill neither defines nor describes chiropractic, the practice of which will be regulated by the General Chiropractic Council. I welcome the comprehensive machinery on fitness to practise to ensure high standards and that other patients are not at risk by the illness of a chiropractor. Allegations may lead to the suspension of practitioners immediately, pending an inquiry into the allegation, which is wholly to the good. All that will add to the public's perception of the profession as being of the highest quality.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough said, 310,000 people in the United Kingdom are off work each day with back pain, which costs the nation £3 billion a year in lost production. The incidence of back pain in Britain is increasing at a faster rate than any other disability. In November 1992, a survey conducted by *Which?* magazine showed that chiropractic was the second most frequently used complementary therapy. It is now 99 years old, with statutory regulation in 17 other countries. This is a Bill whose time has come.

10.34 am

Mr. Knapman: Earlier comments show that all Conservative Members are pleased to see in his place the Minister of State with responsibility for disabled people. In 1979, no such post existed and the budget for disabled people has risen from £1 billion to roughly 10 times as much. So we need no lectures from Opposition Members about looking after disabled people.

Over the past few months, I have had the privilege of serving on the Committee discussing the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill, which prevented me, until now, from commenting as fully as I would wish on important legislation such as this. The fact that that Committee sat for 177 hours taught me how important the Labour party feels it is to scrutinise carefully important legislation. I am, therefore, sure that they will not criticise us for carefully scrutinising this Bill.

Mr. Sykes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I draw your attention to the fact that my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) is speaking, whereas the annunciator shows that my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) is speaking.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair is not responsible for the annunciator. He is responsible for more than enough this morning.

Mr. Knapman: I shall try not to add to your burdens, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This is an important Bill. All those who have spoken have had back problems at some stage. I spent the last election campaign flat on my back in Frenchay hospital with muscle spasms in the back, which is extremely painful. My agent was unkind enough to suggest that my majority went up due to that fact. However, I was grateful for the treatment that I received in the hospital and from chiropractors soon afterwards.

I find the Bill somewhat contentious, so I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will comment on the points that I wish to raise. I shall not take long to raise those points.

It is fair to say that a move to statutory regulation can be seen as a change in the method of regulation, rather than an extension of regulation. That is what we are told, but when we read the Bill carefully, we see that clause 1 provides for the establishment of a General Chiropractic Council and four committees. Indeed, an amendment that was not selected this morning sought to establish five committees. Clause after clause then sets up registers, annual registers, the suspension of registration and so on. How will that all be paid for?

Nineteen people are to sit on the general council, whereas the average size of a council is 10 to 12 people. With a little practice, 19 people could create nearly as much hot air as we do in this place. Is all that to be paid for by 900 people?

That matter has no doubt been considered and I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) who has been as splendid in taking this Bill through the House as my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) was at taking the Osteopathy Bill through the House last year.

However, all the clauses up to clause 13, and again in clauses 20 to 26, which provide for machinery to investigate allegations of unacceptable professional conduct, have cost implications. What are those cost implications? We are led to believe that discussions between officials and representatives of the profession indicate that statutory regulation would have no net adverse cost effect on business. As Mandy Rice-Davies in the pre-"back to basics" era might have said, "Well, they would say that, wouldn't they?" Some 900 members will have to pay for a vast bureaucracy so I presume that, ultimately, the patient will pay.

[Mr. Knapman]

I have concerns about the Bill. I welcome the thrust of it and what it seeks to achieve, but I query the number of committees and the size of the council. I wonder whether 900 practitioners can reasonably be expected to pay for it. I suspect that in two or three years' time, the cost of visiting a chiropractor will be considerably more than it is today.

I am sorry that today we could not could not cover new clause 2 which involves animal chiropractors—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The reason that we could not cover new clause 2 was that it would be out of order to do so. It is certainly not in order on Third Reading.

Mr. Knapman: I thought that I said that I was merely sorry that new clause 2 had not been called today, but I shall not continue on that subject.

I think that I am entitled to ask whether the Government intend to allow the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons to appoint someone to the committees. If there are animal chiropractors, surely the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons should be given the same privileges and rights as the doctors' representatives are given in another clau[illegible]

Mr. Alfred Morris: Would the hon. Gentleman respond favourably to an appeal from the Bill's promoter, the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington), to reduce the length of his speech in order not to endanger the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill? If an appeal is made by the Bill's promoter, who spoke more briefly than some of his colleagues, would the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) respond favourably?

Mr. Knapman: I have already said that I have no intention of speaking for any great length of time. Bearing in mind that, for some minutes when I started speaking, the monitor showed the wrong name, I am the last person to be accused of seeking to detain the House unnecessarily. With one possible exception in relation to a specific Bill, I have never tried to delay the House for any great period. I am sorry that my anonymity should have prevented me from continuing along that line. I merely wonder whether veterinary surgeons should have the opportunity of nominating one member.

I am also concerned about why the Bill involves the Privy Council and a negative resolution of the House. Why are the names proposed not put forward by the Secretary of State in the normal way so that we can ask questions in the House about the Bill's effects? I appreciate that sometimes one avenue of approach is used and sometimes another, but I wonder why, on this occasion, the Privy Council is involved, rather than the Secretary of State.

I hope that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) appreciates that I have no further points to make other than to say that back pains lead to the loss of far more working hours than almost any other ailment. I am sure that the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne) will wish to make a contribution. I see in the *Rochdale and Heywood Express*, under the heading, "Liz backs bill" that she gives her full support to the Bill. I am sure that she will wish to make a few comments on Third Reading.

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): I support the Bill, but I also fully support the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill. The delaying tactics being used are not worthy of any hon. Member.

Mr. Knapman: It seems that when Liberal Democrat Members support a Bill, they no longer express their support in the House of Commons, but issue press releases to the *Rochdale and Heywood Express* stating that they support everything.

Ms Lynne: Some of us spoke in Committee.

Mr. Knapman: If the hon. Lady had been in her place earlier, she would have heard me explain that the rest of us also serve on Committees.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will consider what I have said and respond.

10.43 am

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): I do not intend to delay the House, but I have one short point to make. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) on the Bill. He has chosen to follow the path recommended by many eminent authorities and put in place a system of regulation for chiropractors similar to, but separate from, that for osteopaths. The question I pose to him and the Minister is that, since the central purpose of the provision is to protect the public from rogue practitioners and the like, would it not be desirable to have the fullest co-operation between osteopaths and chiropractors? *[Interruption.]* Before the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne) becomes much more excited, may I say that the issue is of some interest to people who suffer from back pain. The issue was raised in the debate on Second Reading, and I have taken less time to make my speech than her hon. and learned Friend the Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) took to make his point of order earlier this morning, which was not related to back pain or disability. The hon. Lady knows what it involved.

10.46 am

Mr. Sackville: It is with great pleasure that I rise to respond on behalf of the Government and also in my role as the junior health Minister with responsibility for back pain, which seems to be a growing problem. Perhaps the problem is increasing because we live longer and are wearing out our backs or perhaps we abuse our backs through the way we live. I do not know the answer, but it is a large and growing problem to which the Department of Health must give greater attention.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) on his choice of Bill and the efforts that he has made in steering it through the House. Today is an important day because the chiropractic profession helps a great many people who suffer from back pain. The Bill will undoubtedly strengthen that profession and make it more accessible to the NHS and to more patients. For those reasons, I intend to respond for a few minutes. It is fitting that I should do so, although I am aware of the need to leave time for other business later.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury did extremely well in the ballot—the same cannot be said of all ballots. He therefore has precedence today and I shall respond briefly to him.

Lady Olga Maitland: Will my hon. Friend spell out clearly the fact that any patient is entitled to receive chiropractic treatment on the NHS, particularly through a fundholding GP?

Mr. Sackville: Fund holders have absolute freedom to buy the services of chiropractors, just as the family health services authorities have absolute freedom to decide that non-fundholding GPs should have their costs reimbursed —there is access. The Bill gives people—practitioners and public—the confidence to seek to use chiropractic on the NHS. That has not happened to a great extent until now.

Anyone picking up my hon. Friend's admirable Bill would immediately be struck by its size and scope. It probably holds the record for the largest private Member's Bill that the House has ever seen—the records of the House suggest that that is so.

The chiropractic profession will shortly be celebrating its centenary and I can think of no other more suitable event to mark that occasion than the successful achievement of statutory regulation of the profession in the United Kingdom. Within the sphere of health care, statutory regulation often marks the occasion of a profession's coming of age. Through the years, chiropractors have worked diligently, often in the face of opposition, to have their skills accepted and their contribution to health care recognised. Not that long ago —only 30 years ago—chiropractors in some parts of the United States were convicted of practising medicine illegally. The profession is to be commended for holding firmly to its faith and its belief that one day it would win through. That is why today is important.

There is no doubt that chiropractic has an important role in helping increasing numbers of people remain mobile and free from discomfort. Those who have benefited from chiropractic treatment—we have heard from some today and I include myself in that number—are eager to testify to its benefits. It was probably not until June 1990, when the *British Medical Journal* published the results of a Medical Research Council trial on lower back pain that the medical profession in this country sat up and took notice. The MRC trial was the first large-scale comparative study of orthodox and complementary medical treatment of a particular condition, and it compared chiropractic management with hospital out-patient management of back pain. The report by the King's Fund working party remarked:

"The decision to conduct this trial reflected steadily growing public demand for chiropractic treatment, a marked shift in the attitude of the medical profession towards chiropractic, the readiness of chiropractors to subject their treatment techniques to clinical trial and the willingness of chiropractors, hospital consultants, general medical practitioners and state-registered physiotherapists to work closely together."

I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the King's Fund for the considerable contribution that it has made to the Bill. It is also fitting that I should congratulate the chiropractic profession on its success thus far and on its skill in persuading my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury to take up the Bill.

The formation in 1991 of the chiropractic registration steering group marked a significant step in the development of chiropractic in this country. Its members are drawn from all the voluntary associations that represent chiropractors. It is a very diverse profession; to some extent that answers the view expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) that it is top heavy. There are different parts of the profession; everyone needs to be involved. I do not think my hon. Friend will find that the general council will be unwieldy or over-expensive. It will do its job economically.

Together, all these people have been tireless representatives of the profession and a consistent and dependable source of information about chiropractic treatment and the way it is practised in the United Kingdom. The steering group was formed with the single purpose of preparing the way for statutory regulation. It was a great asset to the King's Fund working party, and I know that it has served my hon. Friend and officials from my Department very well.

The steering group has been, however, more than a collection of like-minded people. It represents a change of attitude on the part of members of a profession who have in the past been divided, sometimes bitterly, by their common title of chiropractor. Through the steering group, bridges have been built and a common way forward has been agreed. The success of any statutory scheme will depend on a united profession.

My hon. Friend made some timely and well-observed comments on the future of the profession, and I in turn should like to add some of my own. I have already mentioned changes that have taken place in the profession, as shown by the formation of the steering group. Together, all these developments amount to a life-changing experience. The profession has already started down a new path which promises an exciting future. In the unlikely event that the Bill were to fall, the profession has already come too far ever to be the same again.

The profession ought, therefore, to be setting its sights on how it will shape the future for the benefit of the whole profession. I do not suggest that it should attempt to pre-empt the role of the council; rather, it should build on and develop the spirit of working together that has already taken hold. Increasing each chiropractor's sense of belonging to a single profession should not make practitioners fearful of losing their identity as particular types of chiropractor. After all, geriatricians and obstetricians are trained in and work in very different ways. Both, however, have to register with the General Medical Council, so the analogy is a fair one.

I am aware that times of change can bring uncertainty and that some chiropractic students are anxious about their future. Nothing in the Bill should lend credence to such fears. Should my hon. Friend's Bill be successful, as I hope it will be, there will follow an indeterminate period before the general council can be set up. We discovered from the experience last year with the osteopaths that, even with the best will, it takes a great deal of time for members of the first general council to be identified and appointed.

It needs to be borne in mind, however, that the first council will have an unprecedented role, taking the profession through the transition from voluntary registration to statutory regulation and into the formative years of the new scheme. Although everyone wants the expeditious establishment of the new council, it will be of far greater importance to ensure that those appointed to serve on it are of the correct calibre and possess the breadth of experience necessary to meet their responsibilities.

Running in parallel with the appointment of the general council is the need for the profession to raise the necessary finance to run the statutory scheme. Once the council is established, it could be 18 months to two years before the register opens. In the meantime, the general council will have had to draw up—and have approved by the Privy

[Mr. Sackville]

Council—its rules, of which there are necessarily many. It will also need to have determined and published the standard of proficiency for safe and competent practice. Its education committee will need to have appointed visitors to visit educational institutions and make recommendations to the general council about courses that provide evidence of having reached that standard of proficiency and which, subject to the approval of the Privy Council, should result in recognised qualifications under the Act. Premises may need to be secured, the registrar and other staff will need to be appointed, equipment and stationery will have to be purchased, and so on.

All that will require time. Until the registration fees start to come in, the general council will need to find money from other sources. In addition to the fees, the council will also need enough reserves to finance its fitness-to-practise machinery.

I welcome the Bill and I believe that it will be very beneficial to the chiropractic profession. The widening and growth of that profession will do a great deal for those who suffer from back pain. I commend the Bill to the House; I hope this is the last time we shall see it here, and that it will have a speedy passage through another place.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

10.56 am

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a deeply serious point of order of which I gave notice to the Clerk of the House on Wednesday of this week.

On Tuesday evening, I was informed by a highly authoritative source that a huge number of amendments for the Report stage of the Bill had been drafted by the Government for tabling by Conservative Members. The following morning, no fewer than 80 amendments appeared in the names of five Conservative Members who had taken little, if any, part in debates on the Bill since I first presented it to the House nearly two and a half years ago.

My reaction to the information that I received was to table a parliamentary question for priority written answer today, the earliest date on which that procedure could be used, asking the Lord President how many amendments for consideration at Report stage of the Bill had been drafted by the office of Parliamentary Counsel. The question need not be answered by the Lord President until this afternoon, by which time today's proceedings on the Bill could have concluded, without the House knowing how many and which of the amendments that we shall be debating today were drafted by the Government.

What makes it all the more important and urgent that we should have this information is the fact that the Government said that they would not be tabling any amendments to the Bill on Report. The House ought surely to know whose amendments these really are, and I hope that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will agree—I know how dedicated you are to protecting private Members' time—that it would be helpful if the Lord President told us this morning how many amendments were drafted by the Government at taxpayers' expense. Not to do so can only increase the—now widespread—suspicion that the Government have decided to wreck the Bill by proxy.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You are the defender of minorities, and there is no more important minority than disabled people. The points put to you by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) are extremely serious. They serve to underline what is becoming patently clear: that there is an attempt by the Treasury through the back door to undermine a Bill which publicly it is pretending to allow through. If this is the last nauseating kick of a discredited and moribund Government, it is appalling that it is disabled people who are being kicked.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can you advise the House whether it is in accordance with the rules and the proper spirit of procedure in this place to deluge the Order Paper with new clauses and amendments, with a clear view to talking out and scuppering the Bill? There are 6 million disabled people in this country and they, their families and friends will greatly resent any tactics of obstruction. It is for hon. Members who have tabled amendments to consider how they will face their constituents and themselves if they talk the Bill out. Can you advise the House whether it would be in order for hon. Members to

withdraw their amendments so that the Bill can proceed to further scrutiny in another place and so that any amendments that might be worth adding to the Bill could be tabled again in other place?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I will deal with the matters in the order in which they were raised. Members on the Treasury Bench will have heard the comments of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) about the source of amendments. That is not a matter for the Chair.

As to the fact that amendments have been tabled on Report, that is perfectly normal. It is a matter for individual hon. Members who wish to table such amendments. As long as they are in order and Madam Speaker has selected them, it is appropriate that they be debated. It is, of course, within the power of any hon. Member to seek the leave of the House to withdraw any amendment if he or she so chooses.

It would now be in the interests of all parties if we proceeded—

Mr. Roger Berry (Kingswood): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Last Friday, the House passed a motion calling on Her Majesty's Ministers to

"provide sufficient time on the floor of the House before 27th May 1994 to allow all remaining stages of the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill to be completed".

That motion was carried without a single vote against it. It was not opposed by the Minister, either in his speech or in his actions at the time of voting. I am a new Member, but would not it be in order for the Minister now to make a clear statement to the House about his actions following the decision of the House last Friday, which he did not oppose?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is entirely up to any hon. Member to raise a point of order, but they must be matters for the Chair. I think that we should now proceed to new clause 3—

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): On a further point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I understand that you are responsible for good order in the House and, in many respects, for the reputation of the House. If the reputation of the House is to fall into disrepute, it really is the responsibility of the Chair to pay attention to that; and I know that you do. The House must be being held in contempt. The Bill has had its Second Reading and has been considered in Committee—during which stage the Government tabled no amendments. If this subterfuge goes ahead today and the Bill is sunk because of the Government encouraging certain kinds of Back Benchers to come in at a late stage and destroy it, it must be bad for the reputation of the House. It could be cleared up if the Minister would say this morning, before we go on our way, that he deplores this late attempt to delay and subvert the Bill. If he made that clear statement we would know where the Government stand and that could save the reputation of the House.

New Clause 3

LIABILITY OF EMPLOYERS AND PRINCIPALS

'.—(1) Anything done by a person in the course of his employment shall be treated for the purposes of this Act as done by his employer as well as by him, whether or not it was done with the employer's express knowledge or approval.

(2) Anything done by a person as agent for another person with the authority (whether express or implied, and whether precedent or subsequent) of that other person shall be treated for the purposes of this Act as done by that other person as well as by him.

(3) In proceedings brought under this Act against any person in respect of an act alleged to have been done by an employee of his it shall be a defence for that person to prove that he took such steps as were reasonably practicable to prevent the employee from doing that act, or from doing in the course of his employment acts of that description.'.—*[Lady Olga Maitland.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to consider the following amendments: No. 4, in clause 1, page 1, line 20, leave out

'or a contract for services'.

No. 5, in clause 1, page 1, line 23, leave out 'under those Acts.'

No. 26, in clause 4, page 4, line 5, leave out 'for an' and insert

'in relation to any employment, for the'.

No. 29, in clause 4, page 4, leave out from beginning to end of line 25.

No. 30, in clause 4, page 4, line 26, leave out from beginning to end of line 35.

No. 32, in clause 4, page 4, line 36, leave out from beginning to end of line 40.

No. 33, in clause 4, line 47, leave out from beginning to end of line 50.

No. 35, in clause 4, page 5, line 1, leave out from beginning to end of line 10 and insert—

'( ) The Secretary of State may by regulations prescribe steps which, if taken, would constitute reasonable accommodation for the purposes of this section, and any such regulations may make different provision in relation to different cases or classes of case.'.

No. 34, in clause 4, page 5, line 1, leave out from beginning to end of line 26.

No. 37, in clause 5, page 5, line 27, leave out from beginning to end of line 5 on page 6.

No. 55, in clause 11, page 8, line 15, at end insert—

'( ) In section 133(1) of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 (complaints to which conciliation procedure applies), there shall be added at the end the following paragraph—

"(g) arising out of an act of discrimination, or alleged act of discrimination, in contravention of Part III of the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Act 1994".

and section 140(1)(b) of that Act (restrictions on contracting out of jurisdiction of industrial tribunal) shall have effect as if, after the words "under this Act" there were inserted the words "or the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Act 1994.".'.

No. 57, in clause 11, page 8, line 38, at end insert—

'(4) Any provision in an agreement which is not a compromise agreement shall be void in so far as it purports to preclude any person from presenting a complaint to, or bringing any proceedings under this Act before, an industrial tribunal.

(4A) For the purposes of subsection (4) above, a compromise agreement is an agreement—

(a) which is in writing;

(b) which relates to the particular complaint;

(c) in relation to which the complainant concerned has received independent legal advice from a qualified lawyer, at a time when a policy of insurance was in force covering the risk of a claim by the complainant in respect of loss arising in consequence of the advice;

(d) which identifies the adviser;

(e) which states that the conditions regulating compromise agreements under this Act are satisfied.'.

No. 58, in clause 11, page 8, line 38, at end insert—

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

'( ) In section 136 of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 (appeals to Employment Appeal Tribunal), in subsection (1), there shall be added at the end—
"(g) the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Act 1994".'.

No. 77, in schedule, page 13, line 20, leave out 'in the employment field' and insert
'in contravention of Part III of this Act'.

No. 79, in schedule, page 13, line 26, at end insert—
'(3) A failure on the part of any person to observe a non-discrimination notice issued under this paragraph shall not of itself render him liable to any proceedings.
(4) In any proceedings before a court or an industrial tribunal the observance of, or failure to observe, any such notice may be taken into account in determining any question arising in the proceedings to which that failure appears to the court or tribunal to be relevant, including, in particular, any liability of any person.'.

Lady Olga Maitland: Before I introduce my new clause and amendments, I should make one thing clear. Everyone in the House has one prime concern—care for the disabled. Nobody can claim higher moral ground on that issue—*[Interruption.]* The real issue must surely be —*[Interruption.]* It is disgraceful, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the way the Opposition are trying to shout me down—[HON. MEMBERS: "Shame."]—when I should point out that there are fewer—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. When the Chair rises, I expect hon. Members to sit down. I do not expect to hear "shame" and other words from a sedentary position. Hon. Members have made their views entirely clear; that is their right. But the Chair expects there to be a proper debate on new clause 3.

Lady Olga Maitland: I was trying to say—I think that we should make it entirely clear—that everyone in the House shares a deep and heartfelt concern for the disabled. All of us have a considerable community of disabled people in our constituencies. I certainly have in mine. I have met them. I know them well and am well aware of their concerns. If there is a debate going on right now in the Chamber, it should not be about whether we should try to improve the lot of the disabled, but how and what will be the best means to do so.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Did the hon. Lady draft new clause 3, or was it fed to her by the Government?

Lady Olga Maitland: I make my own plans on my new clauses and amendments. I always seek advice, as I have for every Bill, but I have been deeply concerned with the disabled. Anybody in my constituency will bear witness to the enormous amount of effort and work that I have put in on their behalf.

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): Will the hon. Lady answer the question? Who drafted the amendment? Was it the hon. Lady or was it the Government?

Lady Olga Maitland: I take responsibility for my own amendments.

I must now get on. I do not think that it is very helpful to the disabled community to be met with a barrage of shouting from the Opposition when we should be giving serious and careful consideration to what is in their best interests. I want the disabled to feel independent, free, and able to go about the community with dignity. I want them to have the very best possible access to all amenities, whether in entertainment, public transport or work. Surely we all agree that we have a common concern about that area. I feel keenly that, when we are trying to help what has been a disadvantaged community, we must ensure that we get it right. I am concerned that, so far, the Bill not only needs clarification, but, in my view, redrafting. It would be a great mistake to us all if we found that, in our efforts to help the disabled, we entered into an era of endless litigation in which the only people who could possibly benefit would be lawyers.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): The hon. Lady claims to be vice-chair of the Conservative disability campaign. Will she confirm that it opposes the Bill? Or is it a decision that she has made on her own?

Lady Olga Maitland: My decisions regarding the Bill are entirely my own. I operate without having to be dictated to by anybody.

I think that it is very important that we should look at the detail of the Bill rather than face recriminations and tears later on. We should look at the experience of people in other countries and at how they have made progress in that area, or not. We need look no further than America. It tried, with tremendous enthusiasm, to introduce the Americans with Disabilities Act. Since that Act came into being in 1990, it has turned out to pit the disabled against employers. That is causing many tears, which we in this country would wish to avoid.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Will the hon. Lady help the House by telling us whether, if necessary, she will press the amendments to a vote?

Lady Olga Maitland: Whether I do or not will depend on what my right hon. Friend the Minister says in reply.

I should like to make some progress. We should not be so arrogant as to think that we can plunge forward with legislation without heeding experiences in other lands. The American experience should enable us to avoid pitfalls. The aim of regulation is to help, not to hinder, and it is certainly not to cause such resentment among the people who help the disabled that all the good work is undone.

Mr. Wigley: Is the hon. Lady aware that virtually every disablement organisation in these islands supports the Bill? Those organisations will point out to her constituents that the hon. Lady is talking the Bill out.

Lady Olga Maitland: I shall not be responsible for talking it out. A far greater crime would be to allow the Bill to continue without proper consideration. That would be folly for the disabled and would not help them.

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The hon. Gentleman cannot intervene while the hon. Lady is replying to an intervention. Hon. Members should remember the rules of the House.

Lady Olga Maitland: Rushing headlong into legislation, trying to meet a deadline just for the sake of it, would not help my disabled constituents. Our responsibility to the 6 million disabled is to get the legislation right.

Mr. McMaster: If the hon. Lady is really concerned and if her words are anything more than patronising, glib

nonsense, why did not she table amendments for Committee which could have been moved by members of the Committee? As she did not do that, do not her actions this morning prove that some Conservative Members are trying to stop the Bill?

Lady Olga Maitland: This is the time to table new clauses and amendments. But more than that, we have to make sure that legislation is sufficiently precise, fair and balanced for all concerned.

Ms Lynne: Did the hon. Lady at any time go to the hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry) and put to him her ideas on amendments? Is she aware that there was all-party support in Committee and that not even the Minister objected to the majority of the amendments that were tabled? Is the hon. Lady aware of those facts, or is she just engaging in delaying tactics to prevent the Bill from getting through the House?

Lady Olga Maitland: There are no delaying tactics. I say now and I shall say again that there are many times when one can table new clauses and amendments. Today happens to be the most appropriate time to do that. I repeat, what is the point of rushing the Bill through the House and having regrets and recriminations later? That would not help the disabled one bit. We should take note of the American chamber of commerce, which said that it believed that American civil rights legislation was too adversarial to be beneficial.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): My hon. Friend should appreciate the criticisms about delaying tactics. We all know what is going on. His master's voice has spoken from the Whips Office on our side and that is what it is all about. I want my hon. Friend to know that some Conservative Members deplore the delaying tactics and the idea that we should deny disabled people their rights. We can pass legislation for anything quickly, and this is an opportunity for the Government and the House to get the matter right for disabled people. I say to my hon. Friend as a friend, "For God's sake realise that everybody in your constituency is watching and everybody knows." It is this time, today, that the legislation has to go through.

Lady Olga Maitland: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. I say to him, as I say to the Opposition, that it would be a far greater mistake for me to hurtle down a road that would create perils which it would be impossible to unscramble.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My hon. Friend takes a great responsibility upon herself in obstructing the progress of the Bill. I very much hope that she has studied the issues with care. In the light of what she said about the American experience, may I ask whether she has studied the best research that is available? For example, "Lessons from America" by Victoria Scott is the most authoritative and up-to-date research that we have. It tells us that the National Federation of Small Business Owners in America is of the considered view that the Americans with Disabilities Act, on which the hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry) has closely modelled his Bill, has led to improved business opportunities.

Lady Olga Maitland: But it has also led to increased burdens on employers, companies and businesses in America, and that can destroy opportunities for the disabled and the means of helping them.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Has my hon. Friend read "Lessons from America" to which I have just referred?

Lady Olga Maitland: It is time that I moved on. *[Interruption.]* The House says, "For goodness sake keep moving."

Mr. Dicks: My hon. Friend will need to move rather fast to deal with all the amendments.

Lady Olga Maitland: There is a limit. I could read out reams of American resource material, but surely we should be taking account of the considerations of people in this country who help the disabled. In that context, it is important to consider what employers and businesses are thinking.

11.15 am

All the letters from employers which have been received so far have undoubtedly been sympathetic to the idea of helping the disabled. However, they keenly feel that they have not been fully consulted and that is the crunch issue in all our concerns. The length of consultation is vital because without good will we shall never get the right kind of legislation and the co-operation that is necessary to help the disabled.

Mr. Berry: Which organisations of disabled people did the hon. Lady consult before tabling her amendments?

Lady Olga Maitland: I have been in constant touch with disabled groups in my constituency. Only last night I was in touch with them. It would be invidious to suggest—

Mr. Berry: Will the hon. Lady name just one organisation for disabled people in her constituency or elsewhere which she consulted before she tabled the amendments and tell us its response?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The new clause and the associated amendments are about the liability of employers and principals. We should return to that issue rather than deal with the broad issues that are now being raised.

Lady Olga Maitland: Thank you for your remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Berry: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Lady Olga Maitland: Only if it is applicable to the new clause.

Mr. Berry: Will the hon. Lady advise the House which organisations of disabled people she consulted on the clause before she tabled it and tell us their response?

Lady Olga Maitland: Perhaps we should refer the hon. Gentleman to your remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Perhaps I may be allowed to proceed with my new clause. I have already explained that I am in close touch with my disability groups: there is no need to go further.

The clause is about the liability of employers and principals, and we should examine the responses of employers. Since the Bill was published, concerns have been expressed by businesses large and small. The employers' groups expressing their anxieties include the Confederation of British Industry, the Institute of Directors, the Federation of Small Businesses, the Employers Forum on Disability, the Association of British Insurers, the British Retail Consortium and the British

[Lady Olga Maitland]

Bankers Association. That is a significant list, and we should think carefully about and listen to what those organisations have to say.

Ms Lynne: I am delighted that the hon. Lady gave such a long list of employers' organisations. Will she give a list of the organisations for the disabled in her constituency which she consulted on the new clause?

Lady Olga Maitland: The Opposition are trying to make us go round and round in circles, rather than allow me to proceed with my new clause. After all, Opposition Members are anxious to make progress, yet they seem determined that I should not do so.

Mr. David Congdon (Croydon, North-East): One reason why I was pleased to serve on the Committee was that I hoped that it would have the opportunity to explore various issues—and it did. It is of significance that the Government had ample time to table amendments. As a member of the Committee who wanted to make sure that the Bill was fair and balanced, I would have been ready to listen to the arguments for such amendments. As a member of the Committee that considered the Bill carefully, I feel that the arguments being made this morning come somewhat late in the day. Even if the Bill is not 100 per cent. perfect, it would be better to have a Bill that is 99 per cent. perfect rather than risk losing valuable legislation for the disabled.

Lady Olga Maitland: Once I have explained employers' concerns—and my new clause is employer-related—the House may understand that it would not be wise to hurtle down a route just for the sake of getting something on the statute book today which we would regret later.

We must take into account employers' concerns because without their co-operation the legislation could never succeed. We must take into account the valid point made by employers that the Bill is vague about their precise obligations. They also feel that the Bill would be expensive for businesses—and particularly for small firms—to comply with, as it would require costly modifications to buildings and would cost jobs. I emphasise that the Bill was drawn up without employers being consulted.

I will provide a quick synopsis of comments made by employer organisations, which will make my new clause more understandable.

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): The hon. Lady said that she speaks her own mind and holds her own counsel. Will she say whether she is speaking from a printed Government brief?

Lady Olga Maitland: I am not speaking from a printed Government brief, but reporting the representations made by different business organisations.

The Forum of Private Business stated:

"Even the most well-intentioned and innocuous legislation can impose burdens on business, and the burden always falls hardest on the smallest firms who are the proven job creators."

The Institute of Directors commented:

"While we share the aim of ending discrimination against disabled people, we do not think that the measures proposed by this Bill offer the right solution to this problem."

It was referring to proposals to achieve unrestricted access by the disabled to business premises, which could close small firms across the country. If the Bill were taken to its logical conclusion, it would almost be like placing a tax on small businesses, and clearly that is not what the House has in mind.

The Federation of Small Businesses stated:

"The FSB would be concerned about any new mandatory framework for action concerning legislative accessibility to shops or business premises in the high street which might involve substantial building expenditure."

Mr. Sheerman: On Second Reading, the hon. Lady intervened on the Minister, but did not make a speech. In trying to establish good communications with business, as members of my Front Bench try to do—and I have been in contact with many of the organisations to which the hon. Lady refers—one shorthand procedure is to read and then to send to those organisations the Committee proceedings. The points that the hon. Lady is addressing were well covered in Committee, especially in regard to small firms. She has done a disservice to the Bill and to the House by not reading the Committee proceedings and understanding that those points were met.

Lady Olga Maitland: I acknowledge that there was some contact with small business organisations, but they all feel keenly—bearing in mind the Bill's wide breadth and the scale of its impositions on businesses—that there must be broader and deeper consultation. It is not enough to have one chat, one phone call, one meeting and an exchange of documents. That is not real consultation.

The Association of British Insurers commented:

"The Bill as currently drafted would create serious difficulties for the insurance industry and our policy holders. It would effectively prevent insurers from differentiating between risks, which is a fundamental feature of insurance and applicable to all policy holders."

Mr. Berry: It may help the hon. Lady to know that we met the ABI and it now accepts that the statement that its members could no longer differentiate between risks was not correct. Will the hon. Lady withdraw her comment?

Lady Olga Maitland: If the hon. Gentleman is right and the association holds to that view today, I will withdraw my remark—but I will be in touch with the ABI to learn its current position.

The British Retail Consortium states:

"There is concern that the Bill would impose extra burdens on employers. The cost of converting older and smaller premises to accommodate the disabled may be prohibitive and cease to make the business viable."

We must take those concerns seriously. It would be invidious to ride roughshod over the very people whose co-operation is badly needed. That would not make for good legislation. A small firm operating from a grade 2 or 3 listed building may be required to make extensive changes to its premises. It might not be able to afford that—it could financially cripple the company. I know that the Bill says that there will be a long lead-in time, but we never know.

Mr. Berry: The Bill does not say that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I urge the hon. Lady to return to the substance of new clause 3. She is now speaking in a very broad context. She must address her remarks tightly to new clause 3.

Lady Olga Maitland: I thought that it was appropriate to explain why I am introducing new clause 3. Unless I do so, the House will not understand my proposals.

Employers' concerns are the key to the whole Bill. I will give just one more example, to qualify my arguments. Kwik Save Group plc bitterly complained about lack of consultation. It stated:

"Nothing like sufficient research or consultation has been undertaken"—

Mr. Austin-Walker: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My reading of new clause 3 is that it relates to whether an employer is responsible and liable for the acts of an employee. I cannot see the relevance of the hon. Lady's remarks.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is clear that the hon. Gentleman did not listen to my earlier ruling. I made the same point a minute ago.

Lady Olga Maitland: I maintain that it is essential for proper understanding for me to quote Kwik Save's view:

"Nothing like sufficient research or consultation has been undertaken into the consequences of the proposals. For instance, there is no evidence that its correlation with employment or health and safety legislation has been considered. We need to allow the necessary time for proper research and consultation."

On that score, I must go further into—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady is now taxing the Chair. New clause 3 is not about health and safety, so her last quotation was totally irrelevant. I firmly request the hon. Lady to address the new clause.

Lady Olga Maitland: I stand corrected, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

New clause 3 relates to the liability of employers and principals. It would make employers responsible for discrimination practised by their employees or agents, unless they have taken reasonable steps to prevent it. The new clause would correct an oversight in the Bill as drafted. The Bill places duties and responsibilities on a variety of people, many of whom employ a work force or act through agents.

It would clearly be nonsense to outlaw discrimination while allowing people to dodge their new responsibilities by claiming that it was the employee or agent who had practised discrimination. It would be small comfort to a job candidate who was wrongly denied an interview on grounds of his disability to hear that it was an underling or employment agency, and not his prospective employer, who had discriminated against him.

11.30 am

New clause 3 guards against that possibility by treating discrimination by a person's employee or agent as though it had been carried out by the person himself. It also recognises—

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Lady Olga Maitland: I am sorry, but I have already given way so often—

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I understand that Disability Action, Sutton, a group in the hon. Lady's constituency, is taking strong exception to what she is doing on the Floor of the House today by interfering in the rights of disabled people in her constituency. Will she resume her seat and concede to the requests of disabled people in Sutton and Cheam?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Bogus points of order do not help either.

Lady Olga Maitland: New clause 3 also recognises that it would be unfair to penalise an employer if, through no fault of his own and perhaps in direct contravention of his instructions, an employee discriminated unjustifiably against a disabled person. Therefore, the new clause allows an employer to defend himself against proceedings brought under the provision by proving that he had taken reasonable steps to prevent his employee from acting in a discriminatory manner. New clause 3 is modelled on a provision similar to that in section 32 of the Race Relations Act 1976.

Amendment No. 4 would remove a confusing and unnecessary phrase from the Bill's definition of "employer". The amendment seeks to clarify the Bill at the expense of extraneous detail. The fact that a contract for services has been established between two parties, one of whom is an employer, speaks for itself.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why don't you sit down?

Lady Olga Maitland: Within the same contract it is therefore necessary—

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): My hon. Friend has raised an interesting point.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman's organisation is also objecting to—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) should cease his sedentary remarks. *[Interruption.]* Order. Hon. Members have an absolute right to be heard provided that they are referring specifically to new clause 3.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. An attempt is being made in the House by Conservative Members to destroy this legislation. Nearly all Conservative Members present today have organisations in their constituencies have contacted Labour Members—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for the Chair. The Chair is here to ensure that there is full and proper debate on the issues before the House. We are now considering new clause 3 and the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) was making an intervention.

Mr. Stern: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was about to make the point that the thrust of amendment No. 4 is borne out by experience in other fields and in particular where the Inland Revenue has great difficulty in establishing whether—*[Interruption.]* Mr. Deputy Speaker, there has been a campaign of barracking from the Opposition Benches today. May I appeal to you for protection to enable hon. Members to be heard?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I must tell the hon. Member for Workington, who is commenting from a sedentary position, that I should be grateful if he would desist—or go and have a cup of coffee.

Mr. Stern: The thrust of amendment No. 4 is borne out by the experience of the Inland Revenue, which has great difficulty establishing whether a person is employed or self-employed and the definition of contract for services is frequently used in such cases. Unless my right hon. Friend

[Mr. Stern]

the Minister or the Bill's promoter can rebut the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland), amendment No. 4 would be a worthy addition to the Bill.

Lady Olga Maitland: I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) for making a very worthy intervention. It was a lot more constructive than many of the comments that have been made from across the Floor of the Chamber.

The definition of employer should not extend to a person who may or may not engage the services of another under a contract for services. That term has no useful meaning within that context and its removal will clarify the Bill and go some way towards the aim of promoting conciseness wherever possible.

Amendment No. 5 would remove the final three words from the Bill's definition of employer.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Before the hon. Lady considers amendment No. 5, may I ask whether new clause 3 has the support of disabled persons in her constituency? That point was made a few moments ago. Even if it has, would they approve of anything that would delay the rapid passage of a Bill that is wanted throughout the country and particularly by disabled people?

Lady Olga Maitland: I can confirm that disabled people want the very best possible Bill, the best legislation and the best drafting. They do not want a Bill that is hastily drawn up, which contains flaws and which they feel would not help them in the way intended.

Mr. Berry: Will the hon. Lady name any organisation of disabled people which is other than fully supportive of the Bill as currently drafted?

Lady Olga Maitland: All organisations have their own points of view. May I also say that disabled people have their points of view.

Mr. Berry: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Lady Olga Maitland: We are now straying from the main point, of the amendment. With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will stick to the main point, as I am sure that that is what you have in mind.

Amendment No. 5 would remove the final three words of the Bill's definition of employer. The words add nothing to the meaning of the definition. Indeed, they cause confusion by seeming to refer to a mysterious set of Acts which are not mentioned earlier in the Bill. The removal of those words would clarify the Bill.

Mr. Wigley: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Lady Olga Maitland: Amendment No. 5 is a simple amendment which is intended to clarify the definition of employer in the Bill. The words "under those Acts"—

Mr. Wigley: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) inadvertently or otherwise misled the House a few moments ago when she said that Kwik Save had expressed an opinion on the Bill. I have just spoken to the chief executive of Kwik Save, which is based in north Wales. He told me that he has received no approach and he stated categorically that he would have known of an approach had there been one. Perhaps the hon. Lady would like to withdraw that part, and many other parts, of her comments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) may wish to respond.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it a new point of order?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Yes, indeed. Is not it true that to deliberately mislead the House of Commons is a contempt? If it is a contempt and the hon. Lady has deliberately misled the House of Commons, surely the matter should be referred immediately to Madam Speaker? Does not "Erskine May" say that that should happen at the first possible occasion?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am not aware that the hon. Lady has deliberately misled the House.

Lady Olga Maitland: I can certainly produce the evidence from Kwik Save, but time prevents me from going through all my papers right now. However, if the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) would like to catch up with me later after the debate, I will show him the original correspondence. I can go no further than that.

Amendment No. 5 is simple: it aims to clarify the definition of "employer" in the Bill. The words "under those Acts" are tagged on at the end of the definition. The words are confusing because no Acts are mentioned in the Bill to which they could refer. Indeed, the definition reads sensibly without those words. I propose the removal of the offending words. I commend the new clause and the amendments to the House.

Mrs. Clwyd: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) has again misled the House. She gave the impression earlier that she had consulted—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) wishes to make a speech on any element of the new clause, she is perfectly entitled to do so. Points of order are directed to the Chair and for a ruling from the Chair. I have given a ruling on the issue.

Mrs. Clwyd: This is a different point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance. I have just this moment—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. In future, the hon. Lady should start by explaining that point and should not arrive at it after I have reprimanded her.

Mrs. Clwyd: I am listening carefully to your words of reprimand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I apologise to you. I came into the Chamber just before the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam sat down. She claimed that she had spoken to disability organisations in her constituency, although she failed to mention one. It is important that the House should know that I have just spoken to the Sutton and Cheam branch of Mencap. It fully supports the Bill and it is important that the House should know that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady has been a Member of the House for a good number of years. She knows full well that that point has absolutely nothing to do with the Chair.

Mr. Wigley: It is a good point though.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No, it is not a good point. The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) has been in the House for as long as I have. He knows, too, that it is not a good point.

Mr. Berry: I urge the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) to withdraw the new clause, and I urge other hon. Members who have tabled amendments not to press them—for a very simple reason: all the amendments can be considered in another place, but only if we conclude the Report stage and Third Reading this morning. It is abundantly clear that efforts have been made by some hon. Members to prevent us from completing those stages this morning.

I say immediately that I do not throw that accusation at all Conservative Members. There are Conservative Members who are as angry as we are—[HON. MEMBERS: "And honourable."]—and who are honourable. Other Conservative Members are not behaving honourably at all. The amendments were not tabled to ensure careful and detailed consideration of the Bill. They were tabled specifically to wreck the Bill.

All the amendments could have been tabled in Committee, but I did not receive a single approach from the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam, from the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) or from any other hon. Member who has tabled amendments for consideration today. However, we did receive representations from organisations such as the Association of British Insurers. We tabled amendments suggested by them and discussed them in Committee.

The point is perfectly simple. All 80 amendments could have been discussed in Committee if they had been tabled in Committee. I repeatedly begged the Minister to table amendments on behalf of the Government to address any concerns that he might have. As he failed to do so, I and my colleagues in the Committee tabled amendments through which we attempted to address the Government's concerns. As I said last Friday, I believe that those amendments went a long way to taking on board those concerns. The hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam and her colleagues have been put up to this by the Government.

Lady Olga Maitland *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Berry: The hon. Lady shakes her head. I am afraid, therefore, that I shall have to produce evidence to confirm that point. The hon. Lady and I were invited on Wednesday evening to record a "Westminster Daily" programme in which we were to debate the Bill. The first thing that the hon. Lady said to me as we prepared to go into the studio was:

"Where are we with the Bill?"

I explained to her that the Bill had received an unopposed Second Reading, with 231 hon. Members voting in favour and no hon. Member voting against. I explained to the hon. Lady that the Bill had completed its Committee stage, at which point she said:

"I must read the proceedings of the Committee."

She made that statement after she had tabled amendments for debate this morning.

I know that we have to choose our language carefully in the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I intend to stay in order, but I must say that I think that it is less than honest for the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam to pretend that amendments have been tabled after careful consideration when, out of her own mouth, it is confirmed that she has been put up to it by the Government.

11.45 am

Lady Olga Maitland: The hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry) has been making the most gross slurs against my good name. I have been very concerned for a long time about the disabled in my constituency and elsewhere. For the purpose of tabling new clauses and amendments, it is irrelevant whether I had read the report of the Committee stage at that moment. I ask the hon. Gentleman to withdraw his remarks.

Mr. Berry: Not only have I no intention of withdrawing those remarks, but I shall make a further one, which will be borne out by the video of the programme in question. On three occasions, the hon. Lady was asked whether she had been put up to this by the Government and on three occasions she refused to answer the question.

Lady Olga Maitland: I object to the hon. Gentleman's remarks. I have always and consistently said that the amendments are mine. I have had a long-standing interest in the disabled in my constituency and I stand by that.

Mr. Berry: The video is there. I am aware that the hon. Lady has threatened legal action against *Disability Times*; perhaps she will threaten legal action against me as well. All I can say is that the hon. Lady has behaved dishonourably and dishonestly in this matter.

Mr. Alfred Morris: My hon. Friend says that the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) has threatened the disability press—in particular, *Disability Times*. That would be an odious thing if it happened. Can my hon. Friend give a source for what he has said?

Mr. Berry: The information is on tape.

Lady Olga Maitland: The hon. Gentleman's remarks are absolutely scandalous. He is still trying to imply that I am threatening legal action. How did he come by that information from my private conversation with *Disability Times*? Is he not aware that I confirmed to *Disability Times*, yet again, that the new clause and amendments were mine and mine only?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Before this goes any further, may I be clear that the hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry) did not say that the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) had acted dishonourably in the House? Is that right? If he had done, I should have to ask him to withdraw the remark.

Mr. Berry: I sought the strongest remark that I could make without causing offence to the Chair. If you could advise me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of the strongest language that I could use, I should be grateful.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I accept the hon. Gentleman's good will in making that suggestion. However, if he did say, as I understood it, that the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam had acted dishonourably in the House, I wish him to make it clear that he did not make that statement.

Mr. Berry: I did not make that statement.

This is a serious matter. Disabled people have been campaigning for a civil rights Bill not just for a few weeks or a few months, but for many a long year. They have been campaigning ever since the first Minister for the Disabled, my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), set up a committee to investigate the possibility of such legislation being introduced. In 1982—12 years ago—that committee reported. The issue has been on the table since then, so when people make statements about their good intentions they should be certain that they can substantiate them. There is no doubt that a few Conservative Members are seeking to talk out the Bill. The hon. Member for Bristol, North-West, for example, said on Radio Bristol a fortnight ago that of course the Bill would be talked out. That was before one single amendment had been tabled. He subsequently tabled 50 amendments.

Mr. Stern: I am happy to amplify what the hon. Gentleman said. He may recollect a conversation that he and I had last February, in which I pointed out to him that the inevitable fate of the Bill was that it would be talked out because it was bad legislation.

Mr. Berry: Not one hon. Member voted against the basic principle of the Bill on Second Reading. Yet in other places they said that they were against the Bill and would do all that they could to stop it. As the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West rose to his feet, I will read out a letter that I happen to have in my possession which he wrote to the honorary secretary of Bristol Mencap. Bristol is a city that he and I have in common. It is probably the only thing that we have in common. The hon. Gentleman pointed out in his letter of 17 February 1994:

> "As you will know, I regard the various drafts of the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill as pernicious legislation which would merely serve to provide a cloak for expanding bureaucracy . . . something to be opposed at all costs."

Yet he did not oppose it.

Three or four weeks later, we had the Second Reading debate and the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West and, indeed, the Government could have voted against the Bill. They did not do so. The Prime Minister looked forward to detailed discussion in Committee. But not one amendment was tabled by the Minister or suggested by the hon. Members for Bristol, North-West or for Sutton and Cheam or anyone else who might seek to talk out the Bill this morning. That is why most of us in the Chamber, on both sides of the House are, to put it mildly, a little angry at the behaviour of a small minority.

Mr. Dicks: A lot angry.

Mr. Berry: Yes, a lot angry. I am grateful for that intervention, albeit from a sedentary position.

The consultation on the Bill has been extensive. The all-party disablement group, so ably co-chaired by the hon. Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) and Lord Ashley, has consulted the Minister, the Prime Minister and organisation after organisation for 12 months and more. I dare say that I have spent more time consulting the organisations that the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam listed this morning than she has.

It is appalling that when one asks the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam the simple question of which organisations of disabled people she has consulted, she cannot name one. She asserts that she has consulted, but she cannot name them. If that is not disingenuous—I hope that that word is in order—I do not know what is.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that when the House considers legislation which affects a wide body of people—not only the people that it might aim to help—there is a duty to consult widely all relevant organisations? What consultation has the promoter of the Bill had with the chartered airlines?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are on new clause 3.

Mr. Berry: I should like to answer that question. I received a letter from Britannia Airways and I have spoken to the company on the telephone. I promised that we would meet after the completion of business today, before the Bill —I hope—goes to the other place. I would have met that company this week if I had not been meeting other organisations to discuss the Bill.

Returning to new clause 3 and all the other amendments, let me say in conclusion that the Bill received an overwhelming Second Reading, with 231 hon. Members voting in favour of the Bill and not one voting against. The Government did not vote against. The Minister did not vote against. Indeed, there was not one speech against it.

Mr. Stern: If the hon. Gentleman checks *Hansard* he will find that I made my doubts clear in the Second Reading debate.

Mr. Berry: I confirm that the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West expressed grave reservations about the Bill, although not quite so stridently as in his letter to the secretary of Bristol Mencap that I quoted a few moments ago. Indeed, the contrast is marked. The hon. Gentleman did not have the courage to vote against a Bill which he now says is totally unacceptable. That is the point.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Obviously, the reason why the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) did not vote against the Bill was that he knew what happened to Bob Hayward, his colleague in Bristol who lost his seat at the last general election for in effect destroying such a Bill when it came to the House on a previous occasion. Is that not the real reason why the hon. Gentleman did not have the courage to walk into the Division Lobby to vote against the Bill?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is nothing to do with new clause 3.

Mr. Berry: New clause 3 and other clauses have been tabled not in order to have the debate that we should have had in Committee. We had an extensive debate in Committee and many of the issues were discussed. If other aspects of the Bill should have been examined, that should have been done in Committee. Even now, if the new clauses and amendments are withdrawn, the issues can be discussed in the other place. Was it really pure coincidence that a handful of hon. Members tabled 80 amendments two days ago? Of course it was not. The amendments were drafted by the Government and tabled by tame Back Benchers to wreck the progress of the Bill.

Disabled people are not asking us to speak for them and do things for them, as the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam suggested: they are asking us to let them have the

basic civil rights that we demand for everyone else. We are not talking about charity or about being nice to disabled people—we are talking about people's rights. Disabled people are demanding the rights enshrined in the Bill.

Mr. Dicks: Will the hon. Gentleman make it clear that we do not expect those rights to come the day after the Bill becomes law? That is an important point.

Mr. Berry: Exactly right. The hon. Gentleman has studied the Bill and campaigned for the measures in it over the years. He knows that the Bill has been drafted carefully to ensure that the provisions can be introduced on a reasonable time scale to accommodate the problems of cost and so on.

What really annoys me is that in recent weeks I have heard the Government say one thing in public and seen and heard them do something totally different in private. In public, they have no opposition to the principle of the Bill. The Prime Minister welcomed the Committee stage. It was a case of "Of course, we all want to do something, don't we?" In private, however, it was made abundantly clear that the Government would not let the Bill through and that they intended to wreck it.

As a new Member of Parliament, I am beginning to understand why many people hold this place and its Members in something less than total respect.

Lady Olga Maitland: Nonsense.

Mr. Berry: The hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam is not in the best position the morning after what happened in the local elections yesterday to suggest that there is enormous confidence in her good self and the present Government. It is a serious point. If Members of Parliament and Governments, of whatever political party, behave in such a deceitful manner, persistently misleading people by saying one thing in public and a different thing in private, it is no wonder that we lose respect.

Disabled people want the Bill. They have a right to the Bill. They have campaigned for it for a long time. I beg those who have tabled amendments to withdraw them and allow the Bill to complete its Report stage and receive its Third Reading today. I guarantee that any matters that hon. Members wish to be considered, even at this late hour, will be considered in the other place. On behalf of the 6.5 million disabled people who want the provisions of the Bill, I will do whatever is necessary. I beg those Members who have tabled amendments to withdraw them.

12 noon

Mr. Stern: Unlike the hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry), who spoke for the past 18 minutes, I shall attempt to deal with the amendments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am grateful that the hon. Gentleman intends to stay in order, but, apart from a number of occasions when I reprimanded hon. Members, the rest of the debate has been in order.

Mr. Stern: I naturally accept your partial correction, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) on new clause 2—

Mr. Campbell-Savours: This guy wants to be a Treasury Minister.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) obviously did have a coffee—*[Interruption.]* Order. Is the hon. Gentleman's disability such that he cannot stay quiet below the Gangway?

Mr. Stern: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The new clause deals with a genuine problem in that the definition of the relationship between employer and employee in the Bill is less than precise, as is that of the relationship between acts carried out by one or the other. That matter was not discussed fully in Committee.

I also commend to the House amendments Nos. 4 and 5, which my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam tabled, not least because—

Mr. Alfred Morris: Will the hon. Member give way briefly?

Mr. Stern: The Opposition has launched a campaign of deliberate delay today. They are determined to delay these proceedings as much as possible and to throw the blame on those few hon. Members who oppose the Bill. I will give way to the right hon. Gentleman if he will undertake not to raise matters that have been raised in the many interventions this morning and if he intends to say something that is germane to the subject of my speech.

Mr. Morris: I am grateful to the hon. Member. His colleague from Bristol, my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry), in a distinguished speech, appealed to the hon. Gentleman and to other hon. Members to withdraw their amendments so that we can reach conclusions on Report today. My hon. Friend gave the hon. Member and others a straight pledge that he will see that amendments similar to any on the Order Paper today, or any other amendments that the hon. Gentleman wishes, are considered in another place. We are time constricted—their Lordships are not. Will the hon. Gentleman respond, please, in view of what he has said about brevity, to what his Bristol colleague said?

Mr. Stern: I will certainly respond. I cannot see how an hon. Member in this place can give an undertaking about how the other place will proceed as it has its own rules and orders. I will not permit the amendments that I tabled in an effort to improve an extremely doubtful Bill to be put into the hands of someone who is in favour of all the principles behind the Bill.

I will continue to give my reasons for the various amendments that I have tabled. The first amendment in my name in the group is No. 26. I shall be grateful for any comments from the Minister, but my understanding is that the amendment supplements new clause 3, tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam, by writing similar provisions into another defective part of the Bill. I certainly commend the amendment to the promoters of the Bill. If the hon. Member for Kingswood, who has not dealt with these detailed amendments so far, wishes to answer the points that my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam and I have raised, I shall have no objections to his speaking again in this debate.

Amendment No. 29 goes to the core of one of the approaches in the Bill about which I have strong doubts. It is designed to affect the legal definition of discrimination in clause 4. As I said on Second Reading, the Bill attempts such a definition, but it cannot possibly achieve one and it creates further problems, which are apparent. My

[Mr. Stern]

amendment will strike out words that are capable only of creating litigation after litigation and problem after problem for the enforcers. Despite having read the discussions in Committee, I can see that those views have not been adequately considered. I fully understand and accept what the hon. Member for Kingswood is trying to achieve with the wording, but in my view it will certainly not achieve that aim.

For example, paragraph 2(c) in the first part of clause 4 that I am trying to delete—at least on a probing basis—contains a selection of words that can only be described as vague. This House has a duty to ensure that any legislation that we pass to another place—I accept that further amendments can be made there—

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stern: Not to the hon. Gentleman.

We have a duty to ensure that legislation is sufficiently clear to be intelligible to the lawyers who will have to interpret it. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Jenkin: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I cannot hear my hon. Friend's speech. You have already reprimanded the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) several times.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) seems to have some difficulty containing himself this morning. I appeal to him to be quiet because hon. Members want to listen to the speech of the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern).

Mr. Campbell-Savours: No they do not. No one wants to listen to the hon. Gentleman—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I should be grateful if the hon. Member for Workington would keep quiet.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You have reprimanded my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). He was telling me that the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) had recently hosted a group of deaf people from his area in the House of Commons but did not have the guts to tell them while he was escorting them around this place that he intended to oppose this Bill, which is being proposed on their behalf.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman was doing so in such a loud voice that I could not hear what the hon. Member who had the Floor was saying. I should be grateful if the hon Gentleman would whisper to his hon. Friend in future.

Mr. Stern: May I immediately counter that deliberate mis-statement? No, I withdraw that. May I counter the baseless mis-statement by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), which is directly contradicted by the truth? When I hosted the group from Access for Deaf Students Initiative from Bristol in this House I discussed my views on the Bill with some of them. Those views were no different from those that I have stated today. I invite the hon. Member for Bolsover to withdraw his statement, which directly contradicts the truth.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover does not need any help. He can speak for himself.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Workington is beginning to try my patience.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) giving way to me?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. No one is giving way, as I have the Floor. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) made a statement, which the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) has refuted. The House recognises that the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West was the person present and also recognises the clarity of his statement.

Mr. Stern: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What we have just heard is typical of the calumny that has been heaped on those of us who, in all honesty, are trying to get the House to produce decent legislation rather than just going along with what we are told that people outside want.

Amendment No. 29 would delete clause 4(2)(d). I suggest to the hon. Member for Kingswood that the wording in that paragraph is so imprecise as to be positively impractical. Once again, we are being asked to pass law that no court could possibly enforce. We must accept that if and when the Bill, in any form, becomes law, it will be enforced at some stage as a result of contested litigation in the courts. I do not think that the House can pass a Bill containing such imprecise wording without at least further clarification about exactly what it is intended to mean. I have read paragraph (d) several times and I cannot see any way it could be applied with clarity to any employment case.

Amendment No. 30 would delete paragraphs (e) and (f) of clause 4, because they would be wholly oppressive on any employer to whom they could possibly be applied by an employee or a potential employee.

Reference has been made to the Americans With Disabilities Act 1990 and it is worth considering how it works in terms of attempting to change employers' habits through legislation. That, too, is the purpose of the Bill and the amendments. My hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) rightly pointed out that a great deal of authoritative work has been done on the working of the ADA and that there are a number of different views about it. I have not read the book that my hon. Friend quoted, but I am sure that strong views are held in favour of the working of that Act. It is only right to put an opposite point of view, which does not come from an American source but a well-respected charity that works with the disabled in this country, the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation, RADAR. Victoria Scott, a RADAR official, pointed out:

"Many of the costs of the ADA provisions are being carried by consumers or customers. For example, the cost of making the Relay (typetalk) system available in every state has cost every telephone user an average 10-30 cents per phone bill . . . The ADA has cost America money to implement . . . The costs are dispersed amongst central and Federal Government, private business, transport companies and millions of consumers . . . The main concerns about the ADA surrounded the cost of compliance and the vagueness of certain legal terms"—

where have we heard that before—

"such as 'reasonable accommodation', 'undue hardship' and 'readily achievable'. During the passage of the Act, many expressed concern over the vague terminology."

It is a pity that more hon. Members are not doing the same. Victoria Scott went on to say:

"Even now it is still fashionable to bemoan ADA's moving targets."

On the question of legal problems, she pointed out:

"The US Chamber of Commerce has said that the ADA is too adversarial, that it pits disabled people against employers."

I think that my case for the amendment rests.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I know that my hon. Friend has expressed his opposition to the Bill consistently and frankly over the years and he deserves to be respected for that. It is quite wrong to pray in aid the research that he has quoted, because Victoria Scott proceeded to refute those very points. She cited some of the criticisms that had been made of the ADA, but she went on to explain that they are without adequate foundation. She argued that the concepts of reasonable accommodation and undue hardship are sufficiently robust, as they might be interpreted by the courts, to protect the interests of small business. My hon. Friend is entirely right to be concerned about any legislation that added undue or unreasonable costs to business, because that would be counter-productive. The Bill is securely designed to prevent that from happening.

12.15 pm

Mr. Stern: I accept my hon. Friend's point. Our discussions on the Bill have always been conducted politely, unlike some of the ill-tempered comments from certain Opposition Members.

My hon. Friend is right that the purpose of Victoria Scott's article is to refute the criticisms that have been made. I accept that, given the complexity of the ADA, criticisms, refutation of those criticisms and refutation of the refutation of those criticisms will be made. That is bound to happen because that Act is relatively new. In this debate on the Bill, however, we have heard from one side of the argument alone. Criticisms continue to be made about the Bill, however, and it was my purpose to ensure that at least they were heard in today's debate.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why did the hon. Gentleman not serve on the Committee and make those criticisms there?

Mr. Stern: For once, I will reply to a seated intervention from the hon. Member. I did not sit on that Committee because I was not allowed to do so. I applied to be a member and I told the hon. Member for Kingswood that he was in danger of setting up a Committee that was slightly less than balanced if he did not accept as a member of it someone who had strong doubts about the Bill. The hon. Member for Kingswood told me that he was not a free agent in the matter and, for whatever reason, my request to be a member of the Committee was not accepted.

Mr. Berry: The Committee of Selection made the appointments to that Committee. I was consulted, however, and was inundated with requests from people who wanted to serve on the Committee. I was under considerable pressure to nominate the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister, which I did, to show good faith—that was the term used when that suggestion was put to me. I could not go any further and, given the actions of the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West this morning, I believe that I was correct.

Mr. Stern: We have discussed this amicably on a number of occasions and all I can say to the hon. Member is that if I had served on that Committee I might have been able to put forward a number of the amendments that I have tabled for discussion today.

Mr. Berry: Will the hon. Member confirm that there was nothing to prevent him from giving me those amendments either before or during the Committee? Will he also confirm that at no time were any of his 50 amendments moved by a member of the Committee for our consideration? It was perfectly possible for that to have been done.

Mr. Stern: I am happy to answer those questions, which continue the discussion that we had on Radio 5 this morning. The answer is simple: in the words of Mr. John McEnroe, "You cannot be serious." If the hon. Member looks at the composition of the Committee, he will accept that, apart from the Minister and his PPS, it was composed of hon. Members who were broadly sympathetic to the Bill's objectives. My amendments are largely critical of the Bill.

Mr. Austin-Walker: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stern: No, not until I have finished the point I am making. Given that my amendments are largely critical of the Bill, it would have been foolishness in the extreme to expect that those amendments could have been moved in Committee by someone who was philosophically and practically opposed to their purpose. I will now give way to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that we should get back to the amendments.

Mr. Stern: Amendment No. 33 is a probing amendment and would strike out clause 4(3). The wording of that subsection would make the remit of the clause far too wide. By treating a relative, however distant, of a person with a disability as a person with a disability for the purpose of the clause means that we would be subject to endless litigation about how remote or how close the connection with the disabled person should be to qualify to be covered by the terms of subsection (3).

Mr. Sheerman: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Opposition Members cannot hear what the hon. Gentleman is saying. The Minister's Parliamentary Private Secretary is now talking to the two prime destroyers of the Bill, as she was this morning before the debate started, organising the destruction of the Bill, and as she organised a meeting to conspire to destroy the Bill before the House started to discuss it, in order to carry on the Government's—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There have been far too many sedentary comments all morning. That does not alter the fact that the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) has a fairly quiet voice, and I should be grateful if he would raise it a little.

Mr. Jenkin: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sitting right beside the hon. Members mentioned in the point of order of the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) and I could perfectly well hear the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is obviously down-wind. I could not hear clearly.

Mr. Stern: Amendments Nos. 34 and 35 are intended largely as probing amendments, but they are a genuine attempt to improve the wording of the relevant sections of the Bill. I commend them to the hon. Member for Kingswood on that basis.

Amendment No. 37 is another probing amendment. Although I can understand the point that the hon. Gentleman is making, clause 5, which deals with medical examinations, also seems to me to go far too wide. For example, I suggest that clause 5(1) is otiose. No evidence has been produced of any need for that subsection. When I have spoken to employers about the provision, a number of them—employers who employ medical examinations for some of their staff as a normal practice—regarded the clause as insulting. The hon. Gentleman should have created a climate in which at least a greater need for that subsection was demonstrated.

As for clause 5(3), I suggest to the hon. Gentleman that the provision omits the practice in many firms not simply of requiring a medical examination before taking on an employee, but of requiring for employment purposes a continuing regular medical examination in order that that employment can continue, which is applicable in certain types of employment.

My hon. Friend the Member for—

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Gainsborough.

Mr. Stern: My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) has tabled amendments Nos. 55, 57 and 58 and I look forward with interest to his explanation of them, given the detailed experience in employment and trading law that he gained as a Minister in that sector.

Finally, I shall briefly discuss the last two amendments in my name in this group. Amendment No. 77 seeks to correct wording that is much too vague. To answer the question that the hon. Member for Kingswood asked my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam earlier, I regard the specific wording that I seek to strike out in clause 77 as so vague and unworkable that if necessary I would press that amendment to a Division on that point alone.

Finally, the purpose of amendment No. 79 is simply to create the possibility of a reasonable claim by an employer that he has not discriminated without his having to go through the entire process of litigation which would otherwise be necessary. Despite a certain amount of barracking, I have gone through the amendments in my name as quickly as possible and I am happy now to allow my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle to continue.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I shall speak to my amendments Nos. 55, 57 and 58. My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) was kind enough to refer to my experience in the matter.

I would not want anyone to accuse me of hypocrisy in the matter, so I have to say straightaway that I oppose the Bill. I oppose the Bill as a result of my experience as a lawyer and as a Minister in the Department of Trade and Industry. I believe that it is a regulatory Bill. The burdens that it imposes on small businesses as they emerge from a recession would be severe. Therefore, I make no secret, because I do not believe in hiding anything from the House of Commons, that I oppose the Bill.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Alfred Morris: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that many people regard the Bill as a deregulation Bill—a Bill which will deregulate, as my hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker) said in Committee, the lives of disabled people. They feel that in contemporary society, their lives are heavily regulated. Will the hon. Gentleman think of their viewpoint and accept that there is a strong case for saying that it is a deregulation Bill?

Mr. Leigh: The whole House recognises the huge experience that the right hon. Gentleman brings to those matters, and no one doubts the—

Mr. Tom Clarke: Right honourable.

Mr. Leigh: I am sorry, that the hon. Gentleman brings to those matters. *[Interruption.]* I said right honourable. Let us not get too bogged down in titles. No one doubts his huge experience and the sincerity that he brings to those matters.

No one in the House wants to do down disabled people. No one doubts that they are often confronted by severe difficulties. I do not doubt that. I am lucky. I am healthy; I have healthy children, but I know the appalling problems that confront disabled people and how frustrating it must be for them, for instance, when they come to an office building or a public building to which they cannot gain access. No one doubts the sincerity with which those matters are brought forward.

The research that I have been looking at, especially from America, which has been kindly provided to me, shows the enormous compliance costs that will be placed on business.

Mr. Alan Howarth *rose—*

Lady Olga Maitland *rose—*

Mr. Leigh: I will give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) and then my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland).

Mr. Howarth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I hope that he will spell out the evidence that he has of enormous compliance costs. As he has obviously studied the Bill and its proceedings with care, and other relevant proceedings in the House, he will be aware of a parliamentary question that I put to my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. In his answer, my right hon. Friend refused point-blank to undertake a cost-benefit analysis of the measure.

We are, sadly, all too accustomed to the macabre frivolity which, over the years, has characterised the Treasury approach to questions of social responsibility. Perhaps my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary regards the Bill as simply another conspiracy on the part of the pressure groups which he believes are driving the country to the dogs. Would my hon. Friend care to make any comment on that, and especially will he give us the evidence he has of unsustainable costs, given that it is provided in the Bill—it was amended in Committee—that there should be reasonable and manageable time scales for the implementation of any changes?

Mr. Leigh: I understand why the Treasury was not prepared to answer that question. I should have thought that the work involved in the Treasury in seeking that type of information would be immensely time consuming and costly. I mentioned the American experience, where I am told that Government regulation costs at least $8,000 per household and may reduce national output by as much as $1.1 trillion per year. Unnecessary and inefficient regulation at federal, state and local levels is now costing American people between $810 billion and $1.7 trillion per year, even after taking account of the benefits of regulation, or between $8,400 and $17,000 per year per household.

Those may be exaggerations, but even the Bill's promoters would not doubt that extra burdens will be imposed on businesses. Otherwise, why should many organisations, such as the Confederation of British Industry, the Institute of Directors and the Federation of Small Businesses, repeatedly say that they hold nothing against disabled people and recognise the difficulties that they face, but provide us with detailed briefing showing the enormous regulatory burdens that would be imposed on businesses?

I am honest about the fact that I am speaking today because I do not want the Bill to pass into law. That is a perfectly honourable point of view.

Lady Olga Maitland: On the issue of cost burdens, has my hon. Friend taken into account the assessment made by the Conservative Disability Group, of which I am a sponsor, which says:

"The cost of making all primary and secondary places of education accessible to disabled persons is estimated at £2 billion. The direct cost to office buildings is estimated at £43.7 million"?

Is he also aware that the group has estimated the cost of converting all public buses to accommodate wheelchairs at some £10,000 per bus?

12.30 pm

Mr. Leigh: Yes, I have a similar briefing—*[Interruption.]* That is not surprising. How are we expected to make a speech in the House of Commons unless we seek to obtain briefings from the Conservative Disability Group, the Institute of Directors, Mencap or anyone else? This debate has been conducted in an unpleasant manner, with unnecessary barracking, particularly from the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), which has neither improved the atmosphere nor helped disabled people. We are entitled to our point of view. Is not that what the House of Commons is all about? We are also entitled to obtain briefs from various people.

The Conservative Disability Group says that the Bill is worthy and that the Government should examine the issues that it raises carefully and come up with an initiative that is practical, tested and of great benefit to disabled people—

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Leigh: I am sorry, but the hon. Gentleman has only just entered the Chamber.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I have just been on the phone to Gainsborough.

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Gentleman has never shown any interest in my constituency before. I would welcome him in my constituency.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): The hon. Gentleman referred to the experience in America. Has he read the excellent publication by Victoria Scott, who knows a great deal about disability, entitled "Lessons from America"? If so, has he noted on page 22 that the National Federation of Independent Businesses says that not one of its businesses has suffered unduly or gone out of business as a result of the American legislation? So employers in America have accepted the legislation. Where is the reason for us not to do the same?

Mr. Leigh: The American economy is complex, and political debate there is as robust as it is in our country. Either side of this debate could adduce arguments on their behalf. The hon. Gentleman may be in receipt of a background briefing from the Heritage Foundation, an organisation of which he may not approve ideologically.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: A nasty bunch.

Mr. Leigh: That organisation has conducted some serious research. For instance, it says:

"Between 1 January 1983 and 31 March 1990, private sector employment in the US economy grew by some 90 million jobs, rising from 72.8 million jobs in December 1982 to 91.8 million jobs in March 1990. However, over the next two years, the private sector lost nearly 2.2 million jobs, reaching a low of just over 89.6 million jobs in January 1992. The number of private sector jobs has recovered only slightly since then, rising to 90.1 million jobs."

So the only answer that I can give the hon. Gentleman is that he should look at the evidence, particularly of the regulatory burdens.

I see that you are looking at me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so I shall return to the amendments that I have tabled.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I have just spoken to one of the hon. Gentleman's constituents in Gainsborough and I am informed that the disabled community in Gainsborough wants the Bill to go through this afternoon. Deep concern is being expressed in Gainsborough about what the hon. Gentleman is doing in the House today. Is he prepared to ask his hon. Friends to withdraw the amendments so that disabled people in Gainsborough can have the benefit of the Bill?

Mr. Leigh: I freely admit that disabled groups in my constituency want the Bill to go through. I do not deny that for a moment. I am in contact with them. The hon. Gentleman was not in his seat when I started my speech and honestly admitted that—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The Chair wants new clause 3 to be debated rather than anything else.

Mr. Leigh: I shall now discuss amendment No. 55. One of the problems with the Bill is that it is shot through with drafting errors. Even if the House passed it, I doubt whether it would have a practical effect. No doubt the Minister, who is much better briefed on such matters than I am, can clarify the position for the House.

One issue that I am raising in my amendments is that —on page 18, line 15, clause 11—we ensure that we provide for conciliation by an officer of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service—ACAS. Clause 11 allows recourse to industrial tribunals. As a lawyer, all I

[Mr. Leigh]

can say is that we have built up enormous problems for ourselves through existing employment law and the nature of industrial tribunals. Contrary to the barracking that I shall no doubt receive, if my sensible amendment, which provides for conciliation by an ACAS officer, is accepted—

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wonder if you can help me. You will understand that when Members of Parliament are appointed Parliamentary Private Secretaries to Ministers they are under some restriction. I understand that that is not necessarily a matter for the House, but you might wish to comment on the rights of a PPS—in this case, the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait)—to let her constituents know whether she is in favour of the legislation. I understand that they are concerned and that there have been conversations today. They would like to know whether she wants the Bill to proceed today—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a matter for the Chair and I do not wish to comment.

Mr. Jenkin: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has raised a number of bogus points of order this morning and has been brought up short by the Chair several times for that. Do you have powers to restrain his activities as he is disrupting the debate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair has certain powers, but I see no reason to use them at present.

Mr. Leigh: I was describing how the conciliation could be carried out by an ACAS officer. He has a duty to try to encourage the respondent and the applicant to make a voluntary agreement. My amendment is entirely in the spirit of what I am trying to propose. I tabled it the day before yesterday in the spirit of what I am trying to achieve for disabled people in this country—things should be done by example and voluntary agreements. My objection to the Bill and the reason why I believe that it is fatally flawed is that it attempts to impose a regulatory structure and might ultimately have the opposite effect on disabled people to that which it is aiming to achieve.

Mr. Tom Clarke: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You referred to the powers that you have, which the House respects. As the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) is not talking about the amendment, but about the Bill, is he in order?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman can safely leave that to the Chair.

Mr. Leigh *rose—*

Mr. Sheerman: The hon. Gentleman and I know each other well, as we represent constituencies in a similar part of the world. I know that the hon. Gentleman comes from an extreme wing of the Conservative party, but, even so, I am not castigating him for that. We all know his views and he has an absolute right to criticise the Bill and vote against it. The bad atmosphere in the Chamber today has not been caused by his views, but by the methods that the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends are using to stop a democratic vote on a Bill which has a clear majority behind it in the House. There is a feeling of frustration on both sides of the House and in the country that a strategy is being adopted to prevent a democratic vote from taking place. That is why we are angry.

Mr. Leigh: When I drew a place in the ballot, I ensured that I produced a Bill that was, I hope, interesting and had the support of both sides of the House and all the relevant interest groups. There is a long tradition that if one wants a private Member's Bill to become law, one has to present a Bill that is largely non-controversial. Disabled people have been misled into assuming that there was a chance of the Bill becoming law—there was not. A political gesture is being made. The process has been unpleasant because people have tried to fool disabled people into thinking that the measure will become law. There is never any chance of controversial legislation being introduced by a private Member.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It would be helpful if the hon. Gentleman spoke about his amendments. Moreover, if he does not intend to give way, there is not much point in hon. Members jumping up and down.

Mr. Leigh: I am trying to talk about my amendments: the problem is that I keep being interrupted.

Mr. Berry: Will the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that the Bill is sponsored by Members of all political parties in the House; that it has been as actively promoted by certain Conservative Members as by the Opposition; and that the all-party disablement group is enthusiastically behind it? Will he also acknowledge that the Prime Minister expressed in this Chamber the wish—

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): That won't impress him.

Mr. Berry: Perhaps not. In any case, the Prime Minister said that he "looked forward" to a detailed examination of the Bill in Committee. If, as the hon. Gentleman maintains, the Bill was clearly worthless and incapable of being enacted, how could the Prime Minister, of all people, look forward to its scrutiny in Committee?

Mr. Leigh: There is no harm in Bills being examined in Committee, or in the fact that they may be promoted and supported by hon. Members on both sides. It is important to remember, however, that what we are witnessing today is perfectly normal parliamentary procedure. The same has happened to private Members' Bills many times in the past, and it will happen to them again. We are just as entitled to put across our points of view as others are entitled to theirs.

My amendments are simple. Amendment No. 54 allows an ACAS officer to seek a voluntary agreement. The ACAS officer would not offer any opinion on the merits of either side's case or take sides in any way. ACAS has an excellent record in these matters. It is far better that difficult cases be dealt with by conciliation from the start. The flaw in the Bill lies in the creation of a huge new and highly expensive legal structure which no doubt will have to be paid for by legal aid. That could result in consequences with effects opposite to those intended.

The amendment would also allow complaints to be settled by means of a compromise agreement, thus

enabling two sides to reach a binding agreement outside the industrial tribunal system, provided that the people involved are properly advised by qualified lawyers.

Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva (Brentford and Isleworth): I speak as a member of the all-party disablement group; some of us voted for the Bill on Second Reading. My intervention is intended to be helpful.

One of my hon. Friend's concerns is with the overzealous application of regulation which might be detrimental to businesses and to employment prospects. I served on the Standing Committee considering the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill. There, we introduced an idea which my hon. Friend might find useful. If a dispute is caused by the application of regulations by officialdom to a business or enterprise, that enterprise is entitled to go to a magistrates court and to ask for a stay of execution until the case is heard in full by a magistrate.

Mr. Leigh: My hon. Friend brings his experience to these matters—it seems a worthwhile way of proceeding. We are trying to ensure that we resolve these disputes in the least possible bureaucratic way, avoiding long legal procedures that can be costly for both sides.

Amendment No. 57 allows for complaints to be settled by means of a compromise agreement between parties, when the complainant has been legally advised and specified conditions have been met, as an alternative to recourse to the industrial tribunal procedure. Thus, a binding agreement outside the industrial tribunal system becomes possible. That seems much more sensible.

Amendment No. 58 is also simple. It includes a right of appeal against an industrial tribunal decision to an industrial appeal tribunal. In general, the amendments are designed to ensure that disabled people have a right of appeal on a question of law to an industrial appeal tribunal. That is customary procedure, but it has been left out of the Bill. My amendments are clearly put. They would improve the Bill and I commend them to the House.

12.45 pm

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): It may be for the convenience of the House if I speak at this point to the amendments and new clause, because time is limited and we have a number of other groups of amendments to discuss this afternoon.

Before I turn to the substance of my remarks, may I say that the accusation of the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) that my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait) had entered into a conspiracy with some of my hon. Friends in relation to progress on the Bill is utterly without foundation. I asked my hon. Friend, in her role as my Parliamentary Private Secretary, to ascertain which hon. Members intended to intervene, so that I could time my own speech in a suitable way. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will utterly withdraw any accusation that he made towards my hon. Friend on that account.

Mr. Sheerman: If the right hon. Gentleman's PPS was circulating for that purpose, I apologise unreservedly. I was more concerned about the evidence outside the Chamber that she was talking to the same group of people, miraculously, who are now in the Chamber and talking the Bill out. That was what I was referring to. That is the problem. Everybody knows that there is a Government Whip-inspired attempt to stop the Bill.

Mr. Scott: I would have been more impressed if the hon. Gentleman had had the grace simply to withdraw his remark, which was totally unfounded.

Mr. Stern: On a point of order Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is the second time this morning that statements have been made that are directly contrary to the truth. May I assure the House that, as one of the people to whom the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) clearly referred, I have had no discussion—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. What is the point of order for the Chair?

Mr. Stern: May I assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the statement that was just made, as applied to me, is wholly untrue?

Mr. Scott: My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) moved the new clause and amendments that stand in her name. I believe that it would have been more in tradition with the keeping of the House if she been listened to and allowed to develop her arguments instead of having to endure a range of bullying interventions when presenting her arguments to the House. This is an immensely serious business. We know the impact on the lives of disabled people. It is right that we should address those matters in a mood of great seriousness.

Mr. Berry: I share the Minister's concern about the seriousness of the matter, as he well knows. Given that the matter is serious, will he tell the House the Government's response to the motion that was passed, without opposition, last Friday, urging the Government to provide adequate time for the remaining stages of the Bill? The Bill is sufficiently serious to require full consideration of its remaining stages.

Mr. Scott: I understand the feelings expressed by the hon. Gentleman. I am not in a position to respond to the point that he raised. He knows as well as I do that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) put a point to my right hon. Friend the Lord President—I believe that it was last week—

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Yesterday.

Mr. Scott: —and received a considered reply from him on the matter. It would not be prudent or wise of me to seek to expand on anything that was said by my right hon. Friend, who is, after all, in charge of the business of the House.

Mr. Skinner: What I said to the Lord President yesterday—the Minister was sitting next to him—was that the Government should recognise that a unique motion was passed unanimously last Friday calling on them to provide adequate time to ensure that the Bill got through, noting that, on 64 previous occasions in the past, Governments, both Tory and Labour, had given assistance to private Members' Bills and that it was not a precedent. We are asking the Government to observe the will of the House last Friday, which was expressed through its support for the motion tabled by the hon. Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam). The Minister, who I expected to stand up yesterday and again today, has not responded. I ask him now: will he, on behalf of the Government, give a guarantee that they will provide adequate time in line with

[Mr. Skinner]

that resolution so that disabled people throughout Britain in every constituency will get the benefits of equal treatment?

Mr. Scott: The hon. Gentleman knows that I am not in a position to give those undertakings. He raised the matter in the proper quarter and received an answer from the Lord President.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman can answer this question. Have he or his Department been in any way involved in the drafting of any of the amendments or the new clause tabled by the hon. Members for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland), for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) or for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring)?

Mr. Scott: No part whatever in the drafting of any of the amendments and, to the best of my knowledge, nobody in my Department has been involved in the drafting of any amendments in this area.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Very early in these debates I raised the point that I had highly authoritative information that amendments on the amendment paper—the amendments that we are discussing now, among others—were drafted by the Government. The right hon. Gentleman says that he has no knowledge of being involved. Were they in any way contributed to or drafted in Whitehall—in other words, by the Government? As the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People, the right hon. Gentleman has a very close interest in the matter.

Mr. Scott: The right hon. Gentleman has put down a number of questions to the Lord President and I am sure that my right hon. Friend, who is responsible for these matters, will give the right hon. Gentleman a reply to that matter. I have responded as best I can from the knowledge that I have in this situation.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: May I intervene on that important point?

Mr. Scott: I have not given way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It would be helpful to the House and to the progress of the debate if the Minister were allowed to speak to the new clause and the associated amendments.

Mr. Scott: It might be sensible and for the good—

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall keep it strictly in order. You heard the Minister say "to the best of my knowledge", which means that departmental officials will know the precise position. Could you on behalf of the House ask—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that that is not a point of order for the Chair. *[Interruption.]* Order. The Minister is responsible for his own speech.

Mr. Scott: I have some sympathy for a number of the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam, but I should like to enter some caveats to her assessment of the effect of the Americans with Disabilities Act on the lives of disabled people and its impact on business in the United States. I do not want to go into detail at the moment on that. Obviously, I have read more than once and with considerable care a document called "Lessons from America" on this issue.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Scott: Perhaps I could be allowed to complete a sentence. I do not think that I have yet managed to do that, but when I have I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, for whom I have a great deal of respect.

I have some reservations about the Bill as it stands and support some of the amendments. The overwhelming impression is that business and providers of goods, services and facilities in the United States of America have reacted positively and constructively to the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act and have not found the costs prohibitive. These are early days in the implementation of that legislation, but so far I do not have specific worries about the way in which it is proceeding.

Mr. Tom Clarke: The Minister showed good sense in reading "Lessons from America", which was written by an excellent woman in this field, Victoria Scott. The great worry is that some people do not listen to her first-class advice. If she were offering advice at the Dispatch Box, would not she say to hon. Members that not a single argument has not been answered by that document? Such legislation works in American and it would work here.

Mr. Scott: The hon. Gentleman must judge what would be the response of that particular lady. It would be rash of me to interpret her views for the House.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam that if we are to make legislation in this important area—this point was made several times in debate—we must take people with us. There is no use imposing legislation on reluctant providers of services or employers. The work of persuasion, raising awareness and educating people about the needs of disabled people—and the abilities that they can bring to various parts of society—must be acknowledged.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I do not mean to test my right hon. Friend's patience but to be constructive. He spoke of the need to carry people with him. He has often expressed his principled objection to discrimination and indicated his support for the manner in which the Bill addresses discrimination and its purposes. Where, then, is the difficulty in the Government? May I tempt him to set aside the obfuscation of collective responsibility and say whether the difficulty is to be found in the Department of Trade and Industry or the Department of the Environment? Have Ministers in those Departments not yet applied their minds to the issues? If so, it seems hard on my right hon. Friend to have to defend collective responsibility.

Mr. Scott: I am surprised that my hon. Friend should in any way doubt that Government is a totally seamless garment. I speak from the Dispatch Box on behalf of the Government as a whole. I am sure that all parts of Government agree that if we are to legislate in this sensitive and difficult area, we must get it right. I well understand—

Ms Lynne: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Scott: Perhaps I may be permitted to complete two sentences this time.

I will refer later to the Government's reasons for not tabling amendments at Committee stage, but the hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry) will acknowledge that he responded to various points that I raised in discussions in Committee and accordingly produced amendments. There is still work to be done on the shape of the legislation, so I am not surprised that some of my hon. Friends felt it necessary today to table a range of amendments at least to explore the possibility of further improving the Bill.

Ms Lynne *rose—*

Mr. Berry *rose—*

Mr. Scott: I give way first to the hon. Lady.

Ms Lynne: The Minister said that, to the best of his knowledge, his Department did not give any information for the briefing of Conservative Members who tabled amendments. Will he ask his officials whether anyone in his Department had any knowledge of the tabling of amendments on behalf of the Government? I should be grateful for an answer.

Mr. Scott: The hon. Lady will not get one. In my view, she and other hon. Members are embarking on a fruitless exercise. I should much prefer to get down to the merits of the amendments and new clauses. If the hon. Lady, together with the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe, wants to pursue that matter with my right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council—

Mr. McMaster *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We do not seem to be getting far with discussing the new clause.

Mr. Berry: The Minister spoke of making further improvements to the Bill and he mentioned the seamless garment of Government. Does the right hon. Gentleman appreciate that disabled people and many hon. Members are frustrated because while the Government make statements about improving the Bill, they are—either through lack of time or because of the sudden emergence of 80 amendments—wrecking the Bill? Does the Minister appreciate that we are being told different things by different parts of the Government? That explains our frustration this afternoon.

Mr. Scott: I have some understanding of that, although the most important thing is to address ourselves to the business with which we are dealing and that is the Report stage of the Bill. As part of that consideration, it is perfectly proper for my hon. Friends to table amendments which they believe would improve the legislation.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose—*

Hon. Members: Oh, no.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am sorry, but this is the House of Commons and Conservative Members will not get away with what is happening today.

I want to ask the Minister a question that was asked by the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne). Will the Minister's Parliamentary Private Secretary, the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait), ask the civil servants in the Box whether they are aware of departmental officials giving any help in the drafting of amendments, or handing them to Conservative Members or of Conservative Members having been briefed? We are simply asking the Minister to turn to his PPS and ask her to ask the civil servants so that we can have an answer. We notice that the Minister hid behind the words—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is a very long intervention. I repeat that it is time that we debated new clause 3 and the amendments associated with it.

Mr. Scott: All of us who have been engaged in the passage—

1 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Time is extremely important to us, so I beg to move, That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 60, Noes 0.

Division No. 229] **[1.00 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Austin-Walker, John
Berry, Roger
Boateng, Paul
Booth, Hartley
Bowden, Andrew
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Congdon, David
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dicks, Terry
Dixon, Don
Dover, Den
Fraser, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hannam, Sir John
Hinchliffe, David
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Lidington, David
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lynne, Ms Liz
McCartney, Ian
Macklnlay, Andrew
Miller, Andrew
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Pendry, Tom
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Sims, Roger
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tyler, Paul
Waller, Gary
Walley, Joan
Wigley, Dafydd

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Gordon McMaster and
Mr. Harry Barnes.

NOES

Nil

Tellers for the Noes:
Lady Olga Maitland and
Mr. Michael Stern.

Whereupon MR DEPUTY SPEAKER *declared that the Question was not decided in the affirmative, because it was not supported by the majority prescribed by Standing Order No. 36 (Majority for Closure or for proposal of question).*

Mr. Scott: I was saying when the closure was moved that the attitude of employers and providers of services in Britain to the possibility of legislation in this important area was changing. As the new clause is particularly about employers, I should like to mention them specifically. We have had recognition from the Confederation of British Industry and other organisations of employers that action, including legislation, is acceptable.

The Employers Forum on Disability has given a considerable lead in influencing opinion among employers

[Mr. Scott]

more widely and it is to be congratulated on the steps that it has taken. Employers still have concerns about the precise nature of the legislation, not least about the impact that it might have on their costs. They worry about the lack of consultation—a subject to which I shall return in a moment.

We have also heard about the insurance industry and fears that it may have.

Mr. Dicks: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Scott: No, I am sorry, but I will not give way again for some time because it is important to have a coherent presentation—or as coherent as I can make it—of the Government's position. I apologise to my hon. Friend.

I received a letter from the Association of British Insurers today, stating that it supports the Bill, but making it absolutely clear that that support is given with the vital proviso that the Bill be amended to allow exemption for insurers so that they can continue to differentiate between risks. I believe that the sponsors have already given an assurance to the ABI on that matter, but it was important to draw the attention of the House to the existence of that letter as we are discussing such matters.

1.15 pm

Employers' attitudes are changing positively. It would have been wise for the sponsors of the Bill to begin consulting employers earlier. I am not making a great issue of that. However, the hon. Member for Kingswood said that he had been consulting in recent days and intended to carry on the consultations. He would have been wiser to have those consultations and reassure employers and others—the Bill could have an impact on their businesses and costs—before the Bill began its stages in the House, rather than having to deal with their concerns rather late in the day. Consultation, especially on the impact of the costs imposed by the Bill, should have been the sponsors' responsibility and they came to it rather late in the day. Those involved who contacted me on the matter certainly expressed that view. Having recognised that change of attitude, which has increasingly been reflected by employers, I must deal with the new clauses and amendments.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam tabled new clause 3, which is important, as are the amendments associated with it. It would be important for any legislation on the subject to ensure that unscrupulous employers could not hide behind the defence that an act of discrimination had been committed by someone else, even if acting on their behalf. I made clear my reservations about the legislative approach that the Bill's sponsors took. If the Act is to be effective, employers must take responsibility for ensuring that their staff and agents are aware of its provisions and are suitably trained to act accordingly.

The Government have always maintained that the key to changing attitudes is improved awareness and training. As I made clear on another occasion, whatever its merits the Bill would not remove the need for continued education and for raising awareness about disability. Of course, one can legislate to remove discrimination, but prejudice, misunderstandings and other problems cannot be removed simply by legislation. If society is to arrive at a better understanding of the needs of disabled people we need much education and persuasion. We will achieve that understanding through better training and education on the issue and through raising the general level of awareness in society.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I entirely agree about the importance of education, but does my right hon. Friend also agree that legislation is necessary to shift the culture and to make it possible for such education to be more effective?

Even though my right hon. Friend sees flaws in the Bill and scope for it to be improved, will he allow it to proceed beyond Third Reading to another place, where the Government could table amendments to improve it? If he feels that the Bill is not capable of satisfactory amendment, will he undertake to embark on a consultation process on a draft Bill, which the Government could introduce? The Government could commit themselves to introducing a Bill with which they are satisfied in the next Session of Parliament.

Mr. Scott: It might be an appropriate moment to say that, having considered the provisions of the Bill and the arguments put forward, the Government intend to build further on the considerable advances that have been made as a result of our approach of education and persuasion, which I spoke about just now. We have introduced targeted legislation in this connection before and it has had an effect on people's attitude and approach to disability issues.

When the Bill was introduced, I expressed concern that it was in exactly the same form as it had appeared on previous occasions. I accept, of course, that it is a private Member's Bill and that it was difficult for the sponsors to engage in the sort of consultation in which the Government would be able to engage, were they introducing their own legislation. It is right for me to make it clear today that the Government intend to consult widely on proposals in a number of important areas concerning disability.

At the end of that process, the Government would be prepared to consider assisting in the drafting of any necessary workable and practicable legislation. We propose that the issues that should be covered by that consultation and by possible legislation should be employment, access to goods and services, the provision of financial services, building regulations, as they affect the lives of disabled people and the creation of a new advisory body on disability. Those proposals, Mr. Deputy Speaker, manifestly go wider than employment, which is strictly the subject of the amendments, but, in view of the intervention from my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth), it was useful for me to put on record the Government's intention.

Mr. Tom Clarke: May I remind the right hon. Gentleman that the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, which was a comprehensive Act on disability and much more wide ranging than the appealing, limited Bill before us, was amended greatly in another place, because there was consensus and consultation took place? Does he accept that there is no reason in the world why time cannot be given for the Bill today and for it to be considered in due course in another place?

Mr. Wigley *rose—*

Mr. Alfred Morris *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am not clear whether the Minister is giving way.

Mr. Scott: I thought that it might be for the convenience of the House if I gave way in series to those hon. Members who wish to intervene.

Mr. Wigley: As I am still on my feet, I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. I seek clarification from the Minister about what he meant by saying that the Government may help to draft legislation. Is he saying that the Government are prepared to introduce their own legislation, as opposed to helping to draft a private Member's Bill, if an hon. Member were lucky to be selected in the ballot? Is he working to a timetable that would enable such legislation, whether it was included in the Queen's Speech or introduced by a Back Bencher as a result of the ballot next year, to reach the statute book in the coming year? In the context of the consultations that he will hold, is he talking about anti-discrimination legislation?

Mr. Scott: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's final point would be broadly yes, some statutory rights in terms of discrimination would be included. I would not want to be pressed now on the nature and timing of that legislation. The Government will—

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North) *rose—*

Mr. Scott: If the hon. Lady will control her impatience for just for a moment, I should like to respond to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley).

More than one piece of legislation may be necessary, although I do not want to pre-empt anything. The timing of that legislation might depend on the nature and extent of our consultations and the reactions to them. I can certainly offer the hon. Member my assurance that the Government have no intention of unduly delaying the process in any sense. The Government, having come to the view that it is the right way to proceed, certainly will want to do so with some speed.

Mr. Berry: Will the Minister give way? I am grateful to the Minister.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Is the Minister giving way or is he sitting down? He is giving way.

Mr. Berry: I appreciate that the Minister wishes to appear reasonable, albeit at the 11th hour, but can he confirm that what he is not offering the House is Government support for a comprehensive piece of anti-discrimination legislation and that, indeed, what he has alluded to in a few choice phrases is significantly different from the comprehensive civil rights Bill that disabled people throughout the country are known to want as quickly as possible?

Mr. Scott: I acknowledge that there are significant differences between a comprehensive Bill of the nature that which we are discussing today, and the consultative process and the implications of further action which would flow from the announcement that I have just made.

Ms Walley: Can the Minister confirm that we already have an opportunity to do something about the issue? Why cannot he give a commitment that the consultation process that he is speaking about can start to take place now and be completed while the Bill passes through the legislative procedure? Surely he is simply deferring and deferring, as the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) said—putting off something that he is not prepared to say openly that he is putting off.

Mr. Scott: With respect, in response to an intervention from my hon. Friend, who was pressing me to, as it were, short-circuit the arguments that I was developing about the new clause and amendments that we are discussing, I simply sought to give the House, I thought, the benefit of some advance notice of the intentions of the Government. I do not think that it would be right for me to go any further than that today because obviously the Government are still considering the—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I take note of what the Minister has just said, but I have been very indulgent so far. The debate has gone rather wide. Can we now get back to the new clause that we are discussing with the associated amendments?

Mr. Scott: I am willing to return to that. If I could say only one sentence: of course we would ensure that, in moving down the route that I have indicated, we undertook widespread consultation, not only with those who might be affected in terms of costs or impact on their businesses, but manifestly with the organisations of and for disabled people, in this specific and very sensitive area.

Mr. Jenkin: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Scott: I am conscious of the Chair's ruling, but I give way.

Mr. Jenkin: I am most grateful to my right hon. Friend.

With regard to those specific amendments, given the important announcement that he has just made about the future intentions of Government policy, which is a major development, would amendments— *[Interruption.]*—of the nature that we are discussing now be necessary, or would the legislation that he proposes be restricted and limited, to avoid the wide problems that develop from that comprehensive type of legislation?

Mr. Scott: It is too early for me to give such a judgment. I nevertheless believe, and have believed throughout the passage of the Bill, as I hope that I have demonstrated, that, whatever the outcome of the legislative procedure on which we are embarked, discussion in the House of the issues surrounding matters of discrimination and the role that the law might have in combating that in a range of areas is worth while, because every bit of discussion that we have further informs, not only the House, but those who develop policy officially.

Mr. Dicks: My right hon. Friend the Minister knows how much I respect his work for the disabled. My disability affects the motor part of the brain rather than the thinking part. This seems to be just another cover-up and another delay to avoid introducing legislation. Does my right hon. Friend understand that disabled people cannot gain the access or help that they want? To hear the Minister say that he may be taking the matter forward by delaying it even more is nonsense. Many people without limbs have brains and they know what is going on. They want action today. As a loyal Tory Back-Bench Member, I cannot understand the Government's problem in bringing in the Bill.

1.30 pm

Mr. Scott: My hon. Friend will recognise that the announcement that I have been able to make was as a result of considerable discussions within Government on the way forward. If we are to legislate in this area, we must be sure that we get the legislation right, that it is workable, workmanlike, practicable and based on widespread consultation both with those who would benefit from such legislation and those who may have to alter their practices to comply with the legislation. But if we enter into that consultation, it will be in a positive frame of mind. I am not seeking to delay matters. If we pass the Bill today and it goes through another place, many of those steps would not happen tomorrow, but would take a long time to come into effect—*[Interruption.]* I advise those Opposition Members who are fussing to listen and see the terms of further Government announcements in due course, and then respond to them.

As I was saying when the closure motion was moved, the clause would compel employers to evaluate the guidance given to staff and procedures being used. It would ensure that employers were properly responsible for the actions of their staff and agents in that important area. That, of itself, must be a good thing. Even in the best organised company with the most enlightened training programmes, there are bound occasionally to be employees who do not respond. The clause would allow an employer who had done all that he could to prevent unjustifiable discrimination to defend himself. The new clause is an important and sensible addition to the Bill.

On amendment No. 4, the Standing Committee amended the Bill by modifying the definition of "employer" in clause 1. Instead of the definition under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944, which gives a small business exemption for employers with fewer than 20 employees, the definition now contained in the Bill as amended no longer provides that exemption and extends to an

"employer under a contract for services".

Discussion in Standing Committee focused largely on the removal of the small employer exemption and amendment No. 4 allows the House to reflect on whether the treatment of employed and self-employed people can be assimilated as easily as the Bill's sponsors suggest. A person "employed" under a contract for services is any self-employed person supplying services to the business, be it a window cleaner, a computer consultant or an independent lawyer or other professional.

However, the rest of the Bill is drafted with "employees", as commonly understood, in mind. Thus, in clause 1, the definition of "qualified disabled person" means a disabled person who, with or without reasonable accommodation, can perform the essential functions of the employment position—I emphasise that word—that he holds or desires. In the same way, clause 4 talks of job discrimination in relation to job application procedures, the hiring, promotion or dismissal of employees, employee compensation, training and any other terms, conditions or privileges of employment.

Clause 4(2) continues in a similar vein, with aspects that are apt to be settled by the relationship between employer and employee, not to the much more varied and episodic relationships between an employer and an outside contractor. Clause 4(4) tackles the meaning of "reasonable accommodation" and talks of job restructuring, instituting part-time or modified work schedules, reassignment to vacant positions and appropriate adjustment or modification of examining training materials or policies, which are more appropriate to the employer-employee relationship. The enforcement machinery of complaint to an industrial tribunal would confer on that body a potentially far-reaching and novel jurisdiction in relation to contractual disputes between business and self-employed contractors with which the tribunals are not familiar and which might have a significant impact on their case load and staffing.

The corresponding provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Race Relations Act 1976 phrase their prohibitions differently, focusing on the employment rather than the employer. Section 4(2) of the Race Relations Act makes it

"unlawful for a person, in the case of a person employed by him at an establishment in Great Britain, to discriminate".

At the same time, "employment" is defined by section 78 of the Act to mean employment under a contract of service or apprenticeship or a contract personally to execute any work or labour. That tortuous explanation illustrates that the present Bill may be deficient in its treatment of contracts of apprenticeship, which the law recognises as distinct from contracts of employment. The Bill is perhaps over-ambitious in its all-embracing sweeping up of all contracts for services, as opposed to the more limited category of contracts personally to execute any work or labour.

The Bill's sponsors may have been unduly influenced by American models and terminology which may not always adapt precisely to the United Kingdom's legal framework and conditions. The sponsors have departed from our United Kingdom domestic models in the Sex Discrimination and Race Relations Acts. It will be for them to consider the concept of reasonable accommodation and how that might apply to relations between businesses and their arm's length self-employed contractors.

On amendment No. 5, I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam that the words "under those Acts" seem to add nothing to the meaning of the Bill's definition of "employer". Indeed, I fear that they might cause confusion by seeming to refer to a mysterious set of Acts—"those Acts"—that are not mentioned earlier in the Bill. The removal of those words would clarify the Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) mentioned some sensitive areas of discrimination in employment. As I said in the House on 11 March—and, indeed, on many other occasions—it is the Government's aim that disabled people should be recognised as people with abilities who can contribute to wider society in the same way as anyone else. I recognise the concerns expressed by my hon. Friend in moving amendments Nos. 26 and 32. I have mixed feelings about some of the precise issues raised by my hon. Friend, but we can all agree that the Bill proposes to outlaw discrimination. We have to examine some of the detailed difficulties that might arise from the drafting of the present Bill and we must be concerned about indirect discrimination.

It is more difficult to determine precisely how we can tackle indirect discrimination in this sector than it might be in a number of others. Indirect discrimination can be shown much more clearly in matters of race or sex, but it might be more difficult to demonstrate in the case of disabled people. The group is not homogenous—it

involves a wide range of disabilities and the varying effect of those disabilities on individuals might make it much more difficult to establish what constitutes indirect discrimination. It might be worth the Bill's sponsors giving that subject further consideration.

Ms Lynne: The Minister said that it might be more difficult to demonstrate indirect discrimination in relation to disabled people than to other groups. If he recognised that before, why did not he table amendments in Committee so that we could have discussed Government-tabled amendments there, instead of having to waste the time of the House today and have a disgraceful filibuster on the Bill to prevent disabled people from enjoying their just rights?

Mr. Scott: I hope that the hon. Lady is not accusing me of filibustering. I am trying to respond to points raised in the debate. As for my approach to the Bill in Committee, I was trying to fulfil the remit given me by the Prime Minister, which was to examine the Bill and to raise points of concern that presented themselves to me. In a number of cases, the Bill's sponsors responded with improvements. I thought that that was more in tune with my remit than if I started tabling amendments in Committee.

Mr. Berry: Surely the Minister accepts that that approach was consistent with his remit only if that remit involved ensuring that the Bill was talked out on Report.

Mr. Scott: That is a statement by the hon. Gentleman —it is not one which I would wish to comment on or agree with. As the hon. Gentleman has acknowledged, in Committee we significantly improved the Bill, partly as a result of contributions that I was able to make and partly as a result of his generosity in responding to the points that I put to him.

The Government's view is that the Bill is still defective. It does not take sufficient account of the impact of the costs that it will involve. We were asked to produce a compliance cost assessment for the Bill. It has now been produced for the House. I acknowledge that it does not include the cost-benefit analysis which my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon and others were keen to have. Nevertheless, the compliance cost assessment shows that the up-front costs of introducing the Bill could be as high as £17 billion, with on-going costs of £1 billion a year.

This was the best that the Government could do in the face of the legitimate demands by those interested in the subject that we produce a compliance cost assessment. We had to ask Departments, under severe time pressure, to produce their assessments of what the costs in their areas of policy would be. Then we brought together those costs into the single figure that I have just given the House. I am sure that all who take an interest in these matters will in due course want to look carefully at the assessment to make up their minds about the approach that should be adopted.

Mr. Berry: Will the Minister acknowledge that this is the first time he has given that information to those who have been promoting the Bill? As he said, the Bill has been knocking around for two years. He has been engaged in discussions with the all-party disablement group on this very Bill for two years. How is it that, at 1.42 pm, less than an hour before the end of the Report stage, the Minister can introduce information for which we have been asking for months? Does he feel no embarrassment about behaving in this way?

Mr. Scott: The hon. Gentleman knows very well that it is generally the practice—whether it is law I am not sure —not to produce compliance cost assessments until after Bills have been given a Second Reading. After Second Reading, we were under considerable pressure to produce an assessment. We set the work in hand, and only in the past few days have we been given the strands of information produced by Departments which in turn have enabled us to give the information to the House.

I thought that it would be helpful, as I now have the information, to give it to the House today.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend has provided us with figures only on one side of the equation: the negatives. Will he explain why the Government regard it as out of the question to make an assessment of the benefits, too? It is entirely within the practice and experience of the Treasury to feed new variables into its models and predictions when it makes assessments of the prospects for the economy. The Government could perfectly well do that task—so why do they not do it?

Mr. Scott: My understanding is that the Government have a duty to provide a compliance cost assessment, and copies of it were placed in the Library yesterday afternoon, as my hon. Friend is aware. There is no such duty to produce—

Mr. Berry: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Scott: Not when I have already started replying to an intervention. The hon. Gentleman knows that I respect him and that I never decline to give way to him, but, as I am already replying to an intervention from my hon. Friend, I think that he owes me the courtesy of allowing me to finish.

1.45 pm

The Government do not have any sort of duty to produce a cost-benefit analysis. I understand that that might be useful to the House and have suggested on previous occasions that the sponsors and promoters of the Bill address their minds to the benefits that would flow from the introduction of the legislation that they are undertaking. They could at least start a debate, which might be useful and in which Ministers could take part, on the relative costs and benefits that would flow from such legislation. The Government have complied with their duty —to provide a compliance cost assessment.

Mr. Berry: The Minister now tells me that a document was placed in the Library yesterday afternoon. I ask my questions as a new Member. First, is there any obligation at all on the Minister to inform the promoter of the Bill that that information is available in the Library? Secondly, as I have not received any such information, is it in the post? Thirdly, is it purely fortuitous that that information should arrive the day before the Bill is on Report?

Mr. Scott: As a courtesy to the hon. Gentleman, I apologise. We would normally have informed the promoter of a private Member's Bill. If there was any discourtesy, I apologise to him. Under the rules, compliance cost assessments must be before the House before the Bill is on Report. That is why they were put down yesterday

[Mr. Scott]

afternoon, the earliest possible moment, as soon as that piece of documentation reached my desk. I did my best and I apologise to the hon. Gentleman for the fact that his attention was not drawn to the fact.

If I can move on—

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I repeat what I said earlier and I have been very indulgent. Hon. Members are straying wider and wider from the clause and amendments. The Minister and all hon. Members must get back to them.

Mr. Scott: Obviously, I am anxious to stick as closely to the straight and narrow as I possibly can. I shall seek not to be persuaded away from that by further interventions.

Amendment No. 30 follows earlier suggested amendments to the definitions of "qualified disabled persons" which seek to remove the requirement to make reasonable accommodation for disabled employees. Many employers might consider that aspect of the Bill a burden and be turned against the main spirit of it as a result, but my judgment is that employers would be persuadable in that area. Some might be turned against the Bill by that provision, but I believe that attitudes of employers are changing at the moment. We want them to change still faster.

On amendment No. 35, there would be some merit in having a less complex clause that would enable respective Secretaries of State, in consultation with outside bodies, or with each other where necessary, to determine what regulations might be needed for the various purposes.

As we can see, the term "reasonable accommodation" used in the Bill covers a whole range of specific employment issues, including that of making existing facilities used by employees readily accessible to, and usable by, disabled people. Inevitably, it would be difficult to make existing places of employment and individual workstations "readily accessible and usable". The introduction of such a term could have quite onerous design implications. Such differing terms in the Bill could lead to inconsistency in interpretation and a common presentation would be useful.

Clause 4(2)(a), which is the trigger for clause 4(4), uses the term "reasonable" and so do, for instance, relevant parts of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 and the requirements of part M of the building regulations. Their consistency has some merit and they form a better basis for guidance.

The House will be aware from previous statements and from the earlier part of my speech that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is assessing the practicality of extending access regulations to alterations and to non-domestic buildings. If he decides to introduce such requirements, there would clearly be some interface between any statutory duty laid on employers to make the "reasonable accommodation" that is sought by the Bill and whatever "reasonable provision" would be required because of changes in the building regulations.

I shall now deal with amendment No. 77. As the Bill stands, the commission may refer any cases of discrimination in "the employment field" or "in any other field"—that is to say, in any field whatever. I am convinced that the commission's discretion to make such references should be strictly limited to those areas covered by the legislation. The terms "employment field" and "any other field" are extraordinarily imprecise and too widely drawn and could create uncertainty and confusion. The amendments do much to overcome that problem.

I welcome amendment No. 58 which seeks to ensure that a disabled person would have the right of appeal on a question of law to an industrial appeal tribunal. Industrial tribunals are the proper form for the referral of any complaints that might arise from part III of the Bill.

Clause 11 provides that a complaint arising from part III should be considered by an industrial tribunal. It describes the remedies that tribunals may award if a complaint is upheld. However, it is out of line with existing legislation in respect of complaints taken to industrial tribunals. As I understand it, other legislation in this field—for example, the Race Relations Act 1976—allows that where a case has been taken to an industrial tribunal and the decision is unfavourable, the complainant may take the case to appeal. Therefore, if clause 11 is amended, it will simply be brought into accord with other legislation in this area.

As I said, the amendments would provide for a right of appeal on a question of law to an industrial appeal tribunal. It is the normal provision for appeals against an industrial tribunal decision to go, on a point of law, to the employment appeals tribunal.

As I said some time ago when I started my speech, employment is an important area, but there are other important areas. Access not just to premises but to goods and facilities, to which we may shortly turn, are also important, but employment matters a great deal and I have had time only to skim the surface on this group of amendments. I thank my hon. Friends for giving me the opportunity to discuss the amendments with them and no doubt they will consider my remarks, as I hope will all hon. Members.

Mr. Sheerman: Hon. Members who have followed the progress of the Bill from the beginning will know that it is certainly against my nature to be party political or partisan, but I have bitten my tongue and in Committee, on Second Reading and at other stages in the progress of the Bill I have tried to put my party hat slightly to one side to make progress on the Bill, which has support in all parts of the House. The Bill has the whole-hearted support of the Opposition because it is part of our policy commitment to introduce such legislation.

We must also inform the general public, the disabled, and those who have a disabled family member, by putting the record straight on what happened today—which was shameful. I greatly respect the Minister, but he is the master of the honeyed phrase. He is good at presenting a bad case. What happened today was as we predicted. The Government have murdered the Bill procedurally. We warned the House of that, and we warned the public not to build their hopes too high because we suspected that the Government would ultimately do as they have. We saw that process unfold this morning. We saw Conservative Members clearly organised by the Whips.

We even saw amendments tabled. Those of us who examine legislation requently can recognise a Government-drafted amendment when we see one. I am not saying that it was directly done, but I share the desire of my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) for an investigation into who supplied the amendments that were tabled in such large numbers over the past couple of days.

It was discourteous, to say the least, for information relating to the Bill to be made available in the House only the day before this debate—on a Thursday when most right hon. and hon. Members were in their constituencies to help their local council candidates.

The Government have killed the Bill cynically. They organised its destruction. That is not to say that some Conservative Members—such as the hon. Members for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) and for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth)—did not work extremely hard to get the Bill through Committee and to make it a success. The Bill was murdered as a result of Government conspiracy and certainly not with the support of all their Back Benchers.

The Minister had the cheek to accuse Opposition Members of using bullying tactics when the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) moved her new clause. He knows why feeling is so high today. It is because the majority of right hon. and hon. Members and the public favour the Bill. If the right hon. Gentleman was campaigning in Chelsea yesterday, as I was in Huddersfield, he would have picked up on doorsteps the weary cynicism of the electorate towards the House of Commons. It grows every time they see the kind of activity of which we have been part today, in which there has been behind-the-scenes engineering so that the will of the people is not expressed by a vote of the House. The public expected an honest vote.

An early-day motion supporting the Bill received majority support. There followed a Second Reading and the Committee stage. Last Friday, the House unanimously supported a motion to give the Bill adequate time. Instead, we saw the actions of a cynical Government. I blame not just the Prime Minister but the Secretary of State for Social Security. I know that is difficult for the Minister, because the Secretary of State is his boss. Nevertheless, the right hon. Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley) is totally against the principles of the Bill and everything that it represents. I know that, and most right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House know it.

Mr. Dicks: It must not be forgotten that if the narks who delayed the Bill had not been prepared to do that, members of my Front Bench could not have achieved their objective.

Mr. Sheerman: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. He calls them narks. I call them—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let us stop calling hon. Members anything and return to discussing the new clause.

Mr. Sheerman: You are quite right, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was not going to call them names. I merely wanted to say that the hon. Lady who moved the new clause and those who have supported it and the amendments so vociferously are, if we look at their entries in "Who's Who", dripping with privilege. In that regard, the hon. Members for Sutton and Cheam and for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh)—

Mr. Dicks: He has done a runner.

Mr. Sheerman: As the hon. Gentleman says, he has done a runner. Those hon. Members and others have every privilege of wealth and education. Their lives are liberated to the fullest extent, but they are trying to prevent disabled people from having the basic rights that they demand.

2 pm

New clause 3 and the amendments have been filibustered. The Minister spoke for 50 minutes. However, I shall be very brief. What has happened today is a disgrace and a slur on our parliamentary institutions. The Government will be held to account. This shabby little effort, this white rabbit which has been picked out of the hat today by the Minister, is not a piece of anti-discrimination legislation but an excuse for not giving the House the right to vote for what disabled people want.

Mr. Berry: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It may assist the House if I say that new clause 3 does not present a problem for the Bill's supporters. I am happy to accept new clause 3.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The House will have to make up its mind when the time comes.

Lady Olga Maitland: It is time that we put politics aside on the important issue of the disabled. It is a great slur on the character of the Labour party to suggest that anyone who dares to say, "Let us stop and think clearly and carefully about this Bill" is reprehensible. Surely it is far more reprehensible to go willy-nilly down the road and make errors on the way.

Ms Lynne: I remind the hon. Lady that the Bill has all-party support. Members of her own Back Benches support it, for the very reason that disabled people need civil rights legislation. No doubt her disgraceful behaviour today will be noted in her constituency.

Lady Olga Maitland: The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) said that it was Labour party policy to focus on the disabled. He somehow suggested that no one else cared about the disabled. He is wrong. He also made the great slur—

Mr. Alfred Morris: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Am I right in thinking that we are awaiting a reply from the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) to show that she notes that we have accepted new clause 3 and therefore wish to proceed?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman anticipated me. I was about to remind the hon. Lady that we are still considering new clause 3 and the associated amendments, although there has been an indication that, when the time comes, the new clause will be accepted.

Lady Olga Maitland: With respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was just making a point and I now wish to withdraw.—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. For clarification, do I understand that the hon. Lady said that she was withdrawing the new clause?

Lady Olga Maitland: I think that we had better clarify exactly where we are on this. If Labour Members would bear with me, I was under the impression that I was now able to move on to my amendments in the next group. Is that not correct?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Question has not yet been put.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I now understand that the hon. Lady does not wish to move the new clause. Is that correct?

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read the Second Time, and added to the Bill.

Mr. McMaster: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you confirm that you saw the Government Whip give the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) instructions during that period of confusion? That should clearly be on the record because it proves that the Government's fingerprints are all over what is happening this morning.

Mr. Dicks: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What has happened is an example of the fact that if one is going to get it right, one does not send a girl to do a woman's job—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is the end of this bogus point of order—

Mr. Dicks: I was not being sexist.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am beginning to think that people cannot hear my voice.

Clause 1

Interpretation

Lady Olga Maitland: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 1, line 8, leave out from beginning to end of line 14 and insert—

' "disabled person" means a person who—

(a) is blind, deaf or without speech;

(b) suffers from mental disorder of any description; and

(c) is substantially and permanently handicapped by illness, injury, congenital abnormality or such other disability as may be prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State;

and "disability" shall be construed accordingly;'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 3, in page 1, line 20, leave out from

'means' to end of line 23 and insert—

', in relation to—

(a) any employment under a contract of service, the employer or, in the case of an application for such employment, the person who would be the employer, and

(b) Crown service, or an application for appointment to Crown service, the Crown;

"employment" means employment under a contract of service or Crown service, Crown service being for this purpose—

(a) service for purposes of a Minister of the Crown or government department, other than service of a person holding a statutory office, or

(b) service on behalf of the Crown for purposes of a person holding a statutory office or purposes of a statutory body, but does not include service in the naval, military of air forces of the Crown;'.

No. 8, in clause 2, page 2, line 19, leave out from 'disability' to end of line 28.

No. 38, in clause 6, page 6, leave out line 29.

No. 81, in page 6, line 31, leave out ', sea or air' and insert 'or sea'.

No. 39, in page 6, line 38, leave out from beginning to 'and' in line 39.

No. 40, in page 6, line 46, at end insert—

'( ) This section does not apply to the sale of any interest in land on the open market as between a willing seller and a willing buyer.'.

No. 41, in page 6, line 46, at end insert—

'( ) Nothing in this Act shall be taken to affect the operation of paragraph 10 of Schedule 5 to the Housing Act 1985 (exceptions to right to buy) or paragraph 11 of that Schedule (sheltered accommodation).'.

No. 61, in clause 13, page 9, line 16, leave out '"or deaf"' and insert

'"or deaf or are without speech".'.

No. 63, in page 9, line 17, leave out ' "disability" ' and insert ' "abnormality" '.

No. 62, in clause 17, page 9, line 36, at end insert—

'(2A) Part IV of this Act—

(a) does not apply to the provision of goods, facilites or services outside the United Kingdom except as mentioned in subsections (2B) and (2C) below; and

(b) does not apply to facilites by way of banking or insurance or for grants, loans, credit or finance, where the facilities are for a purpose to be carried out, or in connection with risks wholly or mainly arising, outside the United Kingdom.

(2B) Part IV of this Act applies to the provision of facilities for travel outside the United Kingdom where the act of exclusion, denial or discrimination occurs in the United Kingdom or on a ship, aircraft or hovercraft to which subsection (2C) applies.

(2C) This subsection applies to—

(a) any ship registered at a port of registry in the United Kingdom; and

(b) any aircraft or hovercraft registered in the United Kingdom and operated by a person who has his principal place of business, or is ordinarily resident, in the United Kingdom,

even if the ship, aircraft or hovercraft is outside the United Kingdom at the material time.

(2D) Nothing in this Act shall render unlawful an act done in a country outside the United Kingdom, or in or over that country's territorial waters, for the purpose of complying with the laws of that country.'.

No. 78, in schedule, page 13, line 22, leave out 'in any other field' and insert

'in contravention of Part IV of this Act'.

Lady Olga Maitland The amendments refer to the new definition of "disability". They recognise that the word "disability" can have many different interpretations. There is always a danger of using a form of words that is so woolly as to be virtually useless or so narrow as to exclude many of the people whom one is trying to help. The definition in clause 1 is a brave attempt to cover the variety of conditions as a result of which discrimination may be encountered. However, it strikes me as being too broad and, in some respects, far too uncertain in its scope. I am not convinced that there would be widespread agreement on the meaning of "major life activities".

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have been to the Library to collect a copy of the compliance costs assessment on the Bill, of which only two copies were published. We tried to establish on what basis the document was placed in the Library.

I have been referred to a reply to the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) on 13 October last year which deals with the placing of these documents in the House of Commons. I notice that, because the Bill is primary legislation, the document should have formed part of the explanatory memorandum to the Bill. At no stage does the reply say that the document should have been placed in the Library immediately prior to the Report stage. My inference from the reply is that the document should have been made available to Parliament substantially earlier than last night because no hon. Member has had the opportunity of seeing its fairly remarkable findings. In the

light of that—it is clear that our rules have been abused—is it in order for us to proceed with the Bill? Would it perhaps be in order if the Bill were to—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is quite in order to proceed with the Bill. The Minister will have heard what the hon. Gentleman has said; it is a matter for the Minister.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it different from the previous point on which I have just ruled?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: My point is that perhaps the sitting should be suspended and that additional time should be given to the Bill so that the matter of the compliance cost assessment, which is critical to the Government's case—the Government are putting a high cost on the implementation of the Bill—can be fully considered by the House before it takes a decision on the future of the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: At this stage, I do not take that view.

Lady Olga Maitland: To recap, I was raising the issue of definition. I am not convinced that there would be widespread agreement about the meaning of "major life activities" in clause 1.

Mrs. Irene Adams (Paisley, North): I wonder about the hon. Lady's mentality when she describes definitions. As I was coming to the Chamber today along Grange road in Bermondsey, I had to stop my car in the middle of the road while my daughter got out to help an elderly man in a wheelchair along the road who could not negotiate the kerbs on to the pavement. That was for a stretch of a mile. I challenge the hon. Lady to take that same journey. She should get into a wheelchair and negotiate her way up and down the kerbs on such a road and then see how she would determine severity.

Lady Olga Maitland: I thank the hon. Lady for her remarks, but perhaps she should be reminded that the authority for the area to which she refers is Labour controlled. She should look to her own kind. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. McMaster: That is a disgrace.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is enough. I repeat for the third time that both I and my predecessor have been very indulgent. The debates have at times gone rather wide of the new clause and amendments that we are debating. That is the end of it. We will stick to the amendments that we are debating.

Lady Olga Maitland: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is appropriate that we should concentrate on the main issues.

Mr. Alan Howarth: May I put it to my hon. Friend that she is not under any obligation to make a speech? She can withdraw her amendments and, if my other hon. Friends who have tabled amendments are willing to do likewise, it is still not too late for us to proceed to Third Reading and vote. I put it to her that many millions of people in this country wish her to follow that course.

Lady Olga Maitland: Thank you very much. I have to tell my hon. Friend that I intend to carry on with my explanation because I feel that it would be an error of judgment to skate over problems in the Bill which it would be a great folly to ignore. With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will continue if I may. I am not convinced—

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey): Has the hon. Lady considered that if she carries on with her amendments she will kill the Bill? Will she tell the House what payment has been made to her for the favour that she has been doing the Government Whips today?

Lady Olga Maitland: I call on the hon. Lady to withdraw her remarks.

Mr. Stern: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) has just accused my hon. Friend of accepting a bribe. That must surely be withdrawn.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I did not hear the hon. Lady do that. If she did, I am sure that she would want to reconsider.

Ms Eagle: I did not refer to money at all. I did not accuse the hon. Lady of accepting a bribe. If Conservative Members felt that that was the implication, of course I am happy to set the record straight. I asked what the hon. Lady was to receive in return for talking out a Bill that many people in this country want to see passed today.

Mr. Alfred Morris: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will it be helpful to the Chair and to the hon. Lady to know that we have no great difficulty about amendment No. 1, which the hon. Lady is moving now? In fact, if I accuse the Government of anything in regard to their amendments it is plagiarism. I redrafted the definition quickly and received praise from the Minister for doing it so quickly in the Standing Committee. On that understanding, can we now proceed? There is no point in the hon. Lady ignoring our willingness to accept amendment No. 1.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a matter for the hon. Lady.

Lady Olga Maitland: I shall proceed. After all, it is the will of the House that I should do so. I am trying to concentrate on definitions. I am not convinced that there would be widespread agreement on the meaning of "major life activities". It means different things to different people. Not all of us—

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): My hon. Friend has a reputation on these Benches for being a doughty fighter. I have to say to her today that she is in the wrong battle on the wrong side. In many matters connected with disability, people have to define general terminology. We have no difficulty with it in matters such as the disability living allowance, which covers a range of both physical and learning disabilities. Does she accept that the people who will have to make judicial decisions or judgments about the definition or the wording of the Bill will have no more difficulty than when doing so for other matters associated with social security and health?

2.15 pm

Lady Olga Maitland: I thank my hon. Friend for bringing that matter to the attention of the House. I am trying to point out that if we go for generalised terms, such

[Lady Olga Maitland]

as those in the Bill, it could lead to endless legislation and argument. That would not help the people whom we are trying to help.

For example, the term "major life activities" is very ambiguous and means different things to different people. Not all of us want to climb mountains, but a one-legged man—who perhaps had a leg amputated—who wants to climb mountains and previously derived tremendous pleasure from doing so will probably consider that his major life activity has been substantially limited.

The definition does not catch disabilities which not merely limit people but totally prevent them from carrying out the activity in question. Nor can anyone say with certainty what having

"a reputation as a person who has or had such an impairment",

is intended to mean and whether the impairment is physical or mental. Presumably the wording is not meant to deal with a person who cannot get a job or be provided with a service because people have heard that he or she has chronic asthma, because that is already covered. Therefore, it is intended to cover a person who does not have a condition, but is alleged to have it and consequently suffers the same disadvantage. That is probably the case, but one cannot say so with any certainty.

The definition is also too loose because it includes people with a history of an impairment. It could cover an impairment that did not lead to a substantial loss of function and therefore did not result in any disability. It could include someone with a short-term disability, which subsequently cleared up completely.As for "having a reputation" as a person with an impairment, I find it impossible to predict how those applying the provisions in the Bill might interpret those words, or how courts might decide cases brought under that part of the Bill.

The amendments offer alternative means of dealing with those problems, by providing replacement definitions of disabled people and disablement. The replacements would have the merit of drawing on existing defintions which have been shown to work in practice.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Has the hon. Lady finished?

Lady Olga Maitland: No, I was giving way.

Mr. Clarke: Opposition Members have got the point, so the hon. Lady is free to sit down and let us move on to a decision.

Lady Olga Maitland: That was a totally irrelevant intervention and it was certainly not helpful to the discussion.

Disability or disabled persons can be defined along the lines used in the National Assistance Act 1948, but without using some of the terminology in that Act which would nowadays offend disabled people. For example, the suggested definition should not use the words "dumb" or "deformity". In all essential respects, however, the new definitions reproduce ones that we already know work in that Act.

Mr. Alfred Morris: My hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) could not have been more relevant. Did the hon. Lady hear me say that we are prepared to accept amendment No. 1? Will she now allow us to move forward to consider other parts of the Bill? We could not do more than accept the amendment. Has she heard what we have said?

Lady Olga Maitland: I have heard the right hon. Gentleman's remarks, but I choose to carry on with my explanation, for the benefit of the House.

Mr. John Cummings (Easington): You shabby person.

Lady Olga Maitland: Will the hon. Gentleman withdraw that remark?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The House must settle down.

Lady Olga Maitland: Because of the experience built up since 1948, those alternatives would offer a more secure start for the provisions in the Bill and would provide greater clarity about the scope of the groups covered. I commend the amendment to the House.

I shall now deal briefly with amendment No. 3, which is listed in the group. The amendment is intended to clarify the definition of employer and expands the definition of the Crown as an employer.

Mr. Alfred Morris: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Am I right in thinking that when the hon. Lady said she was turning to amendment No. 3 she was turning to an amendment that has not been selected?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is grouped with amendment No. 1, so the hon. Lady is in order.

Lady Olga Maitland: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The amendment also exempts the armed forces from the scope of the Bill.

The Bill's present reference to the Crown as an employer causes me some unease, because I am not sure that that term is strictly accurate. The amendment would offer a more familiar definition, similar to those used previously—for example, in section 85 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. I am sure that the House will understand why our fighting forces must be in perfect physical condition—that surely speaks for itself. Those personnel are expected, at short notice, to be at the front line of battle anywhere and at any time. It would obviously be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for disabled people to be part of that fighting force. I know that the Ministry of Defence employs more than 1,000 disabled civilian staff, so disabled people already play an important role in supporting the armed services.

For the reasons that I have given, it is impossible for disabled people to take part in direct conflict.

Mr. Alfred Morris *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Question is, That the amendment be made.

Mr. Morris: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I beg to move, That the Question be now put.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] Order. I do not answer to that word. I have not accepted the closure and that is that.

Mr. Stern: I should like to speak briefly to the amendments in my name.

Amendment No. 39 would delete the inclusion of legal services from the Bill's provisions. I am worried about that

inclusion, because, in many cases, the legal profession is organised on the basis of small, often one-man, firms. It strikes me that those firms would have great difficulty in complying with the provisions of the Bill, even on a time-delayed basis.

Amendments Nos. 40, 41 and 62 would delete other services from the terms of clauses 6 and 17. The provisions of those clauses go too far without adequate consideration for the providers of those services, because they outlaw what might, in certain circumstances, appear to be discrimination even if it was not.

Amendments Nos. 61, 63 and 70 are technical and are designed to improve the wording of the Bill.

Mr. Alfred Morris: I have said to the House that we are prepared to accept amendment No. 1. In Committee, the Minister accepted that, on the question of definition, the sponsors of the Bill could not have been more helpful. We were concerned to rectify problems over section 29 of the National Assistance Act 1948, which has been used by successive Ministers and Governments since then. I could not be more reasonable; I again ask the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) to proceed on the basis of our acceptance of the amendment.

Mr. Spring: I shall speak briefly to amendment No. 8 and clause 2(c). I applaud that measure in principle, but I have doubts about its workability in practice.

Disabled people do not form a homogeneous group and there is no viable statistical base from which one could determine whether direct or indirect discrimination was taking place.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: May I tell the hon. Gentleman that an organisation called FAR in his constituency is very worried about what he is doing now, because in the next few minutes he intends to talk out a Bill which will affect 6.5 million people and he, the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds, will be responsible, against the wishes of those very disablement organisations in his constituency which are worried.

Mr. Spring: The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has taken up a great deal of time in making interventions. I would leave it at that.

As my right hon. Friend the Minister commented earlier, there is a distinct difference between the case of minority and racial groups, for which anti-discrimination legislation can be implemented and is easier to tackle, and, for example, women. Therefore, I think that it will be unwise to proceed with that part of the clause.

Clause 2(c) deals essentially with the burdens on small business. During the recession, many small businesses were under considerable pressure. A small and perhaps struggling company with three or four employees may be unable to make the arrangements for the accommodation of disabled people that are suggested in the Bill. Although in principle I think that it is correct, in practice I believe that that would be unduly burdensome for the small business community.

Mr. Jenkin: It gives me very little pleasure to rise so late in the debate. *[Interruption.]* It is unfortunate that so much time has been taken up by bogus interventions and bogus points of order, raised by the Opposition. I have one amendment in my name, amendment No. 81, and that is what I wish to discuss.

It is incumbent on people who feel strongly in favour of the Bill that they recognise that those people who oppose the Bill, such as myself, are behaving in as public spirited a way as they are, because the Bill, as currently drafted, without amendment No. 81, is contrary to the interests of the people of the country and contrary to the interests of disabled people. It is sad that the hopes of disabled people have been so falsely led by expectations that the Bill might become law as currently drafted.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland), who intervened earlier and put up with an enormous amount of bitterness and barracking with great courage and fortitude. The Bill seeks to apply all its measures to air transport, and I wish to comment on that briefly, as there is little time.

Aircraft are not like trains. They have little spare room and a requirement to accommodate disabled people would require a large number of charter airlines to remove large numbers of seats. That may well be desirable and most airlines do their best to accommodate disabled people, but there are important practical safety measures that cannot be incorporated and, if incorporated, would not be adequate. Many civil airline companies might well lose their right to operate if they were subject to that legislation.

Mr. Berry: Read the Bill.

Mr. Jenkin: I am happy to read the Bill.

The problem is the broad definition of disability and the way in which that is likely to be subject to endless litigation. I also believe that the measure is incompatible with European Community law because, if it were sought to apply the legislation to all airlines, it would apply to airlines operating into the United Kingdom and that would represent a restraint on trade.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House proceeded to a Division—

Mr. Campbell-Savours *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I object strongly to having to wear this rubbish—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There will be no point of order then.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: All right—I shall wear the hat. Wearing such nonsense makes us the laughing stock of the western world.

Will *Hansard* record that the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) was the Member of Parliament who talked out the Bill this year? He was on his feet when the Division was called. Will that be recorded?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There was no one on his feet.

Mr. Jenkin *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. With your permission, may I say that I was not on my feet when the Division was called.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That was a totally unnecessary point of order as I had already said that—*[Interruption.]* Order below the Gangway.

Mr. Alan Howarth *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I believe that there is a proposal that this Parliament should give procedural advice to the new South African Parliament on how it should be run. Some further careful reflection is needed on our procedures for private Members' Bills; we are not yet in a position to provide any model.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Dicks (*seated and covered*): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I thought that we were discussing private Members' business today, not Government business. Could the message be passed back to the appropriate quarter that hon. Members, especially Back-Bench Members, expect private Members' days to be private Members' days?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman made that point two or three times during the debate.

The House having divided: Ayes 1, Noes 54.

Division No. 230] **[2.30 pm**

AYES

Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*	**Tellers for the Ayes:** **Lady Olga Maitland and Mr. Michael Stern.**

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene	Lynne, Ms Liz
Austin-Walker, John	McCartney, Ian
Benton, Joe	McMaster, Gordon
Berry, Roger	Miller, Andrew
Booth, Hartley	Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Bowden, Andrew	Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela	Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Clapham, Michael	Raynsford, Nick
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*	Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Chwyd, Mrs Ann	Sedgemore, Brian
Cohen, Harry	Sheerman, Barry
Congdon, David	Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*	Sims, Roger
Corbyn, Jeremy	Skinner, Dennis
Dicks, Terry	Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Dover, Den	Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Eagle, Ms Angela	Soley, Clive
Gerrard, Neil	Spearing, Nigel
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*	Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Hannam, Sir John	Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Hinchliffe, David	Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*	Waller, Gary
Hoyle, Doug	Wicks, Malcolm
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*	Wigley, Dafydd
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*	
Lidington, David	**Tellers for the Noes:**
Livingstone, Ken	**Mr. Harry Barnes and**
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*	**Mr. John Cummings.**

Question accordingly negatived.

It being after half-past Two o'clock, further consideration of the Bill stood adjourned.

Bill to be further considered on Friday 20 May.

2.39 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Would you consider discussing the progress of this Bill with Madam Speaker? As you know only too well, last Friday the House voted unanimously, calling on the Government to provide time to get this Bill for disabled people through the House.

Today, the Government have taken part in an escapade to thwart the Bill's passage. Could you tell us, after consulting Madam Speaker, exactly what procedures will be put in place to enable the wish of the House that was expressed last Friday to be brought to fruition? Six and a half million disabled people expect the House to observe the two unanimous votes: 235 to nil on Second Reading, and a unanimous vote again last Friday.

It is high time this Government were brought to book. If the House is to go up on 15 July for three months holiday, will you at least ask that one or two days be found for this Bill?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sure that Madam Speaker is already fully aware of that request, as the hon. Gentleman put it to her earlier. *[Interruption.]* Order. I am quite capable of conducting the business of the Chair without help from the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours).

Mr. Roger Berry (Kingswood) *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Is it the same point of order?

Mr. Berry: No, but it is clearly related. The fact of the matter is that a clear majority of Members of this House have expressed their support, in writing, for the Bill. Last Friday, no Minister voted against the motion to allow time for the remaining stages to be completed. That being so, how can time not be provided? Will the Minister assure disabled people that it will be?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order for the Chair, and, in any case, it has been made time and again in the the debate.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know that you are aware of my exchange earlier today with your predecessor in the Chair about the parliamentary replies that I am expecting and awaiting from the Lord President of the Council about whether the Government were involved in drafting the amendments in the names of private Members.

I must inform you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I have still not heard from the Lord President. Your predecessor in the Chair said that he was quite certain that those on the Treasury Bench would have heard what I said—but there has been no reply.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have no doubt that they have heard it; but I recollect that the Minister earlier gave an assurance on that very point.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I ask you, on behalf of the House, to convey to the Leader of the House the fact that it would be extremely welcome if he came here and made a statement, before we rise this afternoon, on the Government's plans to provide further time for this legislation—in accordance with the resolution that the House passed a week ago today?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have no doubt that that has been heard by those on the Front Bench.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is there any Standing Order that applies to a resolution of the House such as the one passed last week? If there is not, is it not correct to say, in the old phrase, that if the Government take no notice of such a resolution, they do so at their peril?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is just a matter of opinion.

Mr. Alfred Morris: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am grateful for your response to my earlier point of order, but what the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People said was that he personally had not been

involved. I then asked him whether the Government had been involved in any way in drafting the so-called private Members' amendments. There was no response to that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I repeat what I said earlier. No doubt hon. Members on the Front Bench will have heard what the right hon. Gentleman had to say.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Chair is responsible for how the House is seen by people outside. May I bring it to your attention, in having to implement that, that the House today, because of the behaviour of hon. Members, particularly on the Front Bench, did itself no justice at all? There are some issues that are political between both sides of the House, and there always will be, but the issue that we were debating, for once, went beyond politics, yet politics was brought in. I think—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that if the Chair was responsible for the behaviour of the House, it would behave much better than it does and would come across much better throughout the country.

Remaining Private Members' Bills

RACIAL HATRED AND VIOLENCE BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [*11 March*].

Hon. Members: Object.
Debate further adjourned till Friday 24 June.

WITHDRAWAL OF MEDICAL TREATMENT BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 24 June.

FAIR TREATMENT FOR WIDOWERS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 24 June.

NEWLY QUALIFIED DRIVERS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): On behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess), whose Bill it is, Friday 20 May.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 20 May.

HORSES (PROTECTIVE HEADGEAR FOR YOUNG RIDERS) (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 24 June.

MARRIAGE (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 20 May.

NURSERY EDUCATION (ASSESSMENT OF NEED) BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [*18 February*].

Hon. Members: Object.
Debate further adjourned till Friday 13 May.

NATIONAL PARKS BILL [*LORDS*]

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 13 May.

Rosyth Naval Base

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Michael Brown.]*

2.46 pm

Ms Rachel Squire (Dunfermline, West): I am grateful to have the opportunity today to initiate an urgently needed debate on the future of Rosyth naval base. I speak not just for myself and my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), but for the vast majority of our constituents, a considerable number of whom are service personnel or retired service personnel. Some of them will have been disabled through active service, and they would want me to deplore the conduct of the Government in the debate that we had earlier today on the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill.

The view of people throughout Scotland is that this debate should be totally unnecessary—indeed, it would be totally unnecessary if only we could believe the Government. Only three years ago, Rosyth naval base was threatened with closure. The strategic and economic arguments won the day. They should not need to be repeated. Of course, the Minister and other Conservative Members have said that there is no need for them to be repeated, because no decision has yet been taken on its future. Let me explain why we do not believe that; why we believe that there is about anti-Rosyth bias in key areas of the Ministry of Defence, evident in the defence costs study; and why we believe that the Government cannot be trusted to keep their commitments. I will then go on to argue once again the strategic case for Rosyth as the minor war vessel operating base, and hope that the Minister will listen and that the Government will keep their promises.

No one can deny that Rosyth has been singled out for discriminatory treatment: it was the only base targeted for closure in 1991; the dockyard, which for years had been promised submarine refitting work then had it taken away; and the core group study of the defence costs, which deals with the rationalisation of naval bases, air stations and associated businesses, was led by Rear Admiral Dunt, who is known to be opposed to Rosyth.

I remind the Minister that in 1991 the Select Committee on Defence stated at paragraph 7.12 of its 11th report:

"Concern was voiced in the House and elsewhere about the manner in which the future of the United Kingdom's Naval Bases was being determined . . . We sought simply to establish whether the Review was conducted by the Ministry in a manner that was fair to all parties and based on sound and objective analysis of the options available."

Paragraph 7.18 stated:

"In future analysis the Ministry must ensure that all options are given equal consideration. It is not clear that this was the case with the Naval Support Review."

Those criticisms of three years ago have apparently not been taken on board by the Ministry of Defence in its conduct of the defence costs study.

The duplicity that is once again involved and the failure to provide open information are disgraceful. The only way in which we have managed to get information is through the efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) and through the investigative journalism of a number of newspapers. I mention in particular the *Daily Record*, the *Evening News* in Edinburgh, and *The Sunday Times*.

The latest study of Rosyth began with a questionnaire being circulated to all service personnel asking where they would like to be moved if the base closed. I understand that no similar questionnaire has been sent to all personnel at other bases. That seems to be a clear example of anti-Rosyth bias.

We hear of plans to the effect that when HMS Edinburgh comes in later this year to be refitted at Rosyth dockyard, its stores and stocks, instead of being kept at Rosyth naval base, will be transported to Portsmouth, apparently in the expectation that when the refit is completed in 1995-96 Rosyth naval base will no longer be there to restock and re-store the ship.

It seems that a decision has already been made. Yesterday, I received a letter from a concerned member of the electorate. The envelope has a Plymouth postmark and the letter states that recently in Plymouth a very senior civil servant formally announced to his subordinates that the decision to close Rosyth naval base within three to five years has already been made and that an announcement to that effect will be forthcoming from the Government during the latter half of this year. I await with interest the Minister's comments on that information.

It is all depressingly familiar. In 1991, it was stated that there were no plans for the closure of Rosyth naval base. Then it was stated that all naval bases were being treated equally. The Select Committee did not believe it then and neither did we, and we do not believe it now. It seems that all the Ministers who are involved, including the Prime Minister, have denied information and have been deliberately vague about the commitments and promises that they are prepared to make.

Let me deal with the strategic advantages of Rosyth naval base and its importance in the defence of our country. The Minister will recall that in the debate on the Royal Navy on 17 February I spent some time outlining some of the strategic advantages. I shall not repeat all that I said in that debate. I am not the only one who says that there are strategic advantages: that view is shared by senior naval personnel. As the Minister is aware, a report entitled "Rosyth: an Appreciation" was leaked to us this week. That report was written by some senior naval personnel and states that Rosyth has an operational effectiveness and that the Forth is a large expanse of sheltered waters with a full range of mine-hunting conditions which are a vital ingredient in today's maritime strategy.

There are permanently established danger areas for the firing of mine-hunting charges and the laying of buoys. No other stretch of water in Scotland provides such ideal training conditions for United Kingdom and NATO units. Being geographically close to the Clyde, the locality of the Forth provides excellent facilities from which to springboard support to main operational areas. Facilities still exist for mine countermeasure vessels to be base-ported at Rosyth with a small increase in personnel support costs. The waters of the Forth and their geographical proximity to the Clyde provide an ideal springboard for effective international operations.

Rosyth's naval base has the primary waterfront engineering support organisation for the operational minor war vessel flotilla. The engineering facilities there are the Royal Navy's largest and most comprehensively equipped in support of mine countermeasures. Particular to Rosyth is the naval and dockyard expertise in fibreglass, MWV engine logic racks, minehunting navigation systems and minesweeping equipment. The close proximity of those excellent facilities to the dockyard gives Rosyth the lead as an unprecedented centre of engineering excellence. Such

support could be provided elsewhere only after substantial capital investment. That would waste the £63 million spent in the past 20 years on establishing the site as a specialist facility for minor war vessels.

The report states that harmony rules are the cornerstone of naval personnel policy—although I must say that they are not the cornerstone of the Government's defence policy. Rosyth is a popular base. The majority of the naval personnel stationed there live in the east of Scotland. Rosyth underpins naval recruitment in Scotland and the north of England. One third of all naval recruits come from the north. There is a regular exchange of personnel between ship and shore, which sustains staff competence and provides a valuable base for minor war vessel support in future. If the base is seen to be reduced further with a view to closure, that would greatly damage morale. The people of Scotland would see such a move as a slap in the face for their years of loyalty and service to the defence not only of Scotland but of the whole United Kingdom.

To summarise Rosyth's strategic advantages, it is an ideal base with excellent facilities, a centre of engineering excellence and the only facility that can fully meet the requirements and demands of minesweeper training and operational work-up. Such a linkage is central to the values of the naval support command and establishes the partnership between the command and the fleet.

Clearly, the Government are looking for savings. I ask them to acknowledge the savings already made by Rosyth's naval base. Since it was altered to a minor war vessel operating base in 1991, it has achieved far greater savings than anticipated. The long-term costings of 1992 estimated a figure of £518 million, but that has reduced to £312 million—an overall reduction in running costs on the original naval base cost of 40 per cent. Can the Minister's own Department claim to have achieved such savings? The total assets supported by the base are well in excess of £800 million, so it plainly offers value for money. The authors of the appreciation report believe that further savings could be made by sharing mutual services between the base and the dockyard.

A further reduction at the base will waste money, not save it. A large number of civilian and naval personnel have left the base. By next January, as part of those savings, there will have been an agreed 800 civilian job losses and 1,400 naval staff will have moved on. However, in the final report of defence costs study No.10, Rear Admiral Dunt and others want to move the supplies and transport sections of Rosyth to—surprise, surprise—Portsmouth, leaving Rosyth providing only waterfront support and with 135 people, as compared with more than 1,000 just three years ago.

Paragraph 7.22 of the Defence Select Committee report of 1991 states:

"Cost-benefit analysis is clearly the key to deciding the most effective way of rationalising support facilities: that it was being done so late in the day is frankly extraordinary . . . MOD witnesses seemed to be suggesting to us that Ministers will be given costings only in support of the recommendations made by the Review. If that were so, it would be most unsatisfactory . . . We trust that Ministers insisted on seeing costings for all options before making their decisions. We urge the Ministry to provide the House with full costings of the proposed changes in naval support".

I urge the MOD and the Government to ensure that such information is made fully available to the House and that a full, informed and open debate is held before any recommendations, let alone decisions, are made.

As I want to give the Minister ample time to reply, I will close by reminding him of some of the commitments that have been made to Rosyth naval base. On 16 July 1991, the then Secretary of State for Defence said:

"Following a thorough review of basing arrangements, I have decided that when the new force structure is in place ships of the Royal Navy will continue to be based at each of the naval bases at Portsmouth, Devonport, Rosyth and Faslane."—[*Official Report*, 16 July 1991; Vol. 195, c.*149*.]

That statement was made in the full knowledge of the impact on naval commitments of the end of the cold war.

A letter from the private secretary to the Secretary of State for Scotland to the leader of Fife regional council stated:

"The Secretary of State for Defence has indicated that the base will have a continuing role, retaining about two-thirds of the service personnel, and about the same proportion of the civilian workforce at the base and dockyard."

A letter to Fife regional council from the then Minister of State for the Armed Forces, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), who is now the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland stated:

"The decision made sense in defence and public expenditure terms and takes careful account of all the arguments that have been advanced in Rosyth's favour."

Finally, a letter in March 1992 from the private secretary to the Prime Minister to the leader of Fife regional council stated:

"Ministers have made it clear that Rosyth Naval Base will continue to have an important role to play in Britain's defence."

Rosyth has done everything that has been asked of it and more. The strategic case, objectively costed and judged against the alternatives, will establish the logic of retaining Rosyth naval base as the cost-effective option for minor war vessel support. The task should be consolidation and commitment in respect of what the base has achieved.

I am not asking for special treatment for Rosyth. I am asking for equal treatment and for recognition of the real need for an objective review of the efficiency and effectiveness of all the naval bases currently under study. I look forward to hearing the Minister's reply and, I hope, to receiving some straight answers and assurances that the base's future is secure.

3.4 pm

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Jonathan Aitken): I congratulate the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire) on her good fortune in securing this debate. In the two years since she entered the House and since I became Minister, I have formed a healthy respect for the way in which she champions the interests of her constituents at Rosyth and elsewhere. She is, indeed, a doughty fighter for them and this debate is further evidence of her concern.

The Government, of course, recognise the importance of the base to the hon. Lady's constituents, to the people of the immediate area and to Fife generally. I am glad to have the opportunity to respond to some of the recent concerns about the future of the base which have been prompted by the current study into defence support costs, known as "Front Line First". I am sure that the hon. Lady recognises and accepts that many issues in the national interest are currently under consideration in the context of the "Front Line First" study. Some of them may have a bearing on Rosyth naval base. She will understand that because the defence costs study exercise is not yet completed and because Ministers genuinely have not reached decisions on any of the studies, it is not possible for me to comment in

[Mr. Jonathan Aitken]

too much detail while our internal deliberations are proceeding. Nevertheless, I shall do my best to be helpful to the hon. Lady.

Ms Rachel Squire: The Minister says that the defence costs study has not yet been completed. Has study group No. 10, which deals specifically with the rationalisation of the naval bases, completed its study, especially in respect of Rosyth naval base?

Mr. Aitken: I think that the hon. Lady is getting her numbers mixed up, but let us not quibble over details about defence costs study numbers. The study is completed, but the study is simply a recommendation. That recommendation has not yet been decided on by Ministers, who, as I shall explain later, have to take into account wider considerations which the hon. Lady properly raised. There has been a great deal of rather excitable speculation about the base in recent weeks. I am glad, therefore, to address the issues that the hon. Lady has raised and to put the matter in its true perspective. I shall begin with a little background which is essential fully to appreciate the current circumstances.

In July 1991, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) announced plans to reduce Rosyth naval base to a minor war vessels operating base by 1995-96. Those plans were confirmed in early 1992 and since then work to achieve an orderly transition to minor war vessels base status has been proceeding well. The commitment and dedication of the work force, both service and civilian, towards that end has been commendable and I place on record my appreciation for it.

In recent months, the base has seen considerable activity. The move of the type 42 destroyers to Portsmouth will be completed later this year and the last type 42 operating out of Rosyth, HMS Edinburgh, will formally transfer her base port. I shall deal here with one of the hon. Lady's points which she seemed to think was proof of a sinister, anti-Rosyth conspiracy. She saw the fact that HMS Edinburgh had had her spares taken out at Portsmouth as proof of an anti-Rosyth bias. As I just said, HMS Edinburgh is one of the type 42 destroyers, all of which are moving their base port to Portsmouth later this year.

It is standard practice for vessels going into and out of refit to be de-stored and re-stored at their base port. In Edinburgh's case, that will be Portsmouth. That is what is happening and that has already been explained to the House by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. There is no connection between Edinburgh's refit and Rosyth's status as a naval base.

Ms Rachel Squire: I thank the Minister for that clarification. However, does he agree that it is standard practice that if a ship is being brought in to be refitted at one of the dockyards, the stores are kept nearby so that they can be put back on the ship at the earliest opportunity? If he says that that is not the practice, will he explain why money is being spent transporting material more than 500 miles when it could be kept just 200 or 300 yd away?

Mr. Aitken: I have just tried to explain what is standard practice. The standard practice is for a ship to be de-stored and re-stored at its base port. As was announced some time ago, HMS Edinburgh's base port will be Portsmouth. That is why the de-storing and re-storing takes place there. That is the simple explanation, which has nothing to do with Rosyth naval base.

Time is getting on. The hon. Lady is eating into my time. I shall do my best to cover her points, although it is becoming difficult to do so in the time available. I shall perhaps skip the background, although it is important, and turn to the key matters that she raised. She seemed to be convinced that Rosyth had been singled out for special and unfair treatment by the defence costs study. She is completely wrong in this matter. All naval bases were examined and there was no discriminatory treatment for Rosyth. The study was of all naval infrastructure.

I appeal to the hon. Lady and her hon. Friends not to personalise criticisms against Admiral Dunt in the same way as, I am sorry to say, some time ago criticism was personalised against Admiral White. It is not the admirals who make decisions. It is Ministers who make decisions and they are responsible for them. All that I can say is that Admiral Dunt, with a team which is well qualified to discharge its remit, carried out the study with impartiality and integrity. Ministers will decide on their recommendations.

I agree that the turbulence to which the latest examination of Rosyth gives rise, following so closely on the 1992 decision to reduce the base to a minor war vessels level, is unfortunate in some respects. I have a genuine human sympathy for the real anxieties that the current uncertainties create among the work force and their families at Rosyth. One would have to be inhuman not to feel some sympathy. We hope to get the uncertainty over with as soon as possible and announce the results of the defence costs study in July at the latest.

It does not help matters if the hon. Lady and her hon. Friends give the uncertainties a spin of bitterness by allegations of deceit. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was unfairly accused of deceit. I repeat what he said in the House of Commons on 5 February 1991 when he was asked about the base at Prime Minister's Question Time:

> "No decision has been made to close Rosyth or any other naval base. We fully recognise the implications that closure would have for employment in the area. Those implications would be fully considered and examined before any such decision was taken." —[*Official Report*, 5 February 1991; Vol.185, c.159.]

That is hardly the great assurance or broken promise that the hon. Lady seemed to allege.

The hon. Lady made great play of the brochure and praised the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) for his great role as an investigative journalist from the *Daily Record* in uncovering great leaks. In the second world war one of the most potent pieces of military equipment was the Browning gun. What we are seeing now in Scotland is a familiar new weapon—the Gordon Browning media gun instead of the Browning machine gun.

I have the brochure here. It could hardly be a more obvious document. It almost resembles an estate agent's brochure. There is no tremendous secret about it. It was produced last year well before the defence costs study and it was intended as an internal document and produced for local management. In no sense does it seek to establish a case for Rosyth as a centre for minor war vessels in the context of an overall review of naval infrastructure. That is what the current study is doing. It is wrong to treat it as a

case for Rosyth's retention. However, all the points made in it were perfectly fair and have been taken into account as part of the defence costs study work.

The study into naval bases has been intensive and thorough. An enormous amount of work has gone into the examination of various aspects of the present arrangements and Rosyth's excellent record as a centre for minor war vessels is fully recognised, as indeed are those of the other naval bases. It is an objective study and all those aspects will have to be taken into account when determining the way ahead.

The 1991 study of Rosyth correctly took into account the base's capabilities and other relevant factors. Our latest deliberations will take due account of all those. Equally, we have to take note of emerging operational trends affecting the deployment patterns of minor war vessels. I assure the hon. Lady that there is no intention of discounting in any way Rosyth's claim for basing minor war vessels, but simply an intention to demonstrate that there is a range of factors that we must assess and balance against each other if we are to reach the best decision in economic, operational and value-for-money terms.

The hon. Lady mentioned the widespread reliance of the Fife economy on defence activities in the region. We accept that point and assure her that those important considerations are clearly recognised. Clearly those are matters primarily for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, but all the points that she has put forward will be taken into account and considered carefully.

In summary, I emphasise that we recognise and pay tribute to the vital role that Rosyth naval base has performed in support of the fleet. It has adapted to change, as its current transition to a minor war vessels base shows. There is a lot to admire at Rosyth, not least its dedicated and skilled work force.

At the same time, I do not apologise to the House or to the country for including Rosyth within the ambit of the defence costs study. In today's circumstances, it is our duty to explore all possibilities for securing greater value for money in delivering our operational capability.

As I emphasised, the decisions will be made by Ministers and will come only after the fullest consideration of all the factors involved. Whatever the outcome of our studies in connection with Rosyth naval base, the hon. Lady can be assured that our decisions will be based solidly on what makes the best operational and financial sense and that—

The motion having been made after half-past Two o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at sixteen minutes past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 25 April 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Pharmaceutical Injury Claims

Mr. French: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the total net cost of providing legal aid to those people making pharmaceutical injury claims for the years 1991, 1992 and 1993.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested is not available.

Mr. French: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many pharmaceutical injury claims were made in the years 1991, 1992 and 1993.

Mr. John M. Taylor: This information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. French: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many pharmaceutical injury cases were commenced through the small claims courts in each year since 1990.

Mr. John M. Taylor: This information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. French: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what percentage of all personal injury claims were accounted for by pharmaceutical injury claims in 1991, 1992 and 1993.

Mr. John M. Taylor: This information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Magistrates, West Midlands

Mr. George: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the political balance of magistrates in each of the districts within the west midlands county.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The political balance of magistrates in each of the districts within the west midlands county, on the latest information available, is as follows:

	Conservative	*Labour*	*Liberal/Democrat*	*Independent/ Not known*
Birmingham	217	139	58	96
Coventry	84	72	33	45
Dudley	103	53	25	31
Sandwell	149	93	29	19
Solihull	64	17	9	52
Walsall	68	51	30	27
Wolverhampton	68	23	15	45

Private Security Firms

Mr. George: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many private security firms have been employed by his Department for each of the last 10 years; what has been the annual value of the contracts; and if he will estimate how many guards have been employed for each of those years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The table contains the best information available. The number of private security firms and guards employed over each of the past 10 years has been estimated on the basis of the information that we have.

Year	*Estimated number of firms*	*Estimated number of guards*	*Total cost* £
1984-85	1	9	135,900
1985-86	3	17	248,700
1986-87	4	29	376,500
1987-88	5	31	592,625
1988-89	7	64	687,275
1989-90	6	72	1,037,536
1990-91	9	107	1,226,940
1991-92	10	132	3,063,651
1992-93	10	175	3,069,785
1993-94	10	281	4,430,286
Totals	65	917	14,869,198

TREASURY

Departmental Publications

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer for how many regular publications he was responsible in 1993-94; what was their circulation; and how many were obtainable by subscription.

Sir John Cope: The departments and agencies for which the Chancellor of the Exchequer is responsible issue a large number of publications each year. Detailed information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

National Debt

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the national debt of central Government in *(a)* December 1990 and *(b)* at the latest available date; and what is the level projected for 31 March 1995 on current trends.

Mr. Portillo: A detailed breakdown of total debt of the public sector, including central Government, at end-financial year from end-March 1984 to end-March 1993, is given in table S1 of the March 1994 edition of "Financial Statistics". Central Government debt data at end-calendar year are not available.

Forecasts of total central Government debt are not made, but forecasts of net public sector debt and general Government gross debt appear in table 6.3 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1994" published last November.

Excise Duties (Alcohol)

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the payments of excise duties on alcohol to the Treasury for 1991, 1992 and 1993; and what effect the recent change in the date of collection has had on the revenue collected.

Sir John Cope: Receipts of excise duty on alcoholic drinks totalled £4,936 million in 1991 and £5,103 million in 1992. Receipts of £5,100 million in 1993 are estimated to have been some £200 million lower than otherwise due to the change to end product duty for beer.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures he is considering in order to rectify the alleged deficiencies and inaccuracies in the Government's United Kingdom trade statistics, and described in "UBS Global Research Economic Briefing" dated 21 March; and if he will make a statement, with particular reference to the amount of *(a)* last year's current account deficit, *(b)* the United Kingdom's 1993 invisibles surplus and *(c)* export and import volumes to the EC.

Sir John Cope: Details of investigations into the quality of the visible trade statistics, particularly on our trade with other European Community members, were given in the replies of my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) on 8 February, *Official Report*, column 121-22 and to my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold) on 21 March, *Official Report*, column *21*. The Central Statistical Office has since announced that it aims to release preliminary findings on 12 May.

On invisibles, the CSO believes that the published estimates of net investment income are the best available. The Union Bank of Switzerland analysis raises a number of interesting issues, most of which have already been investigated. The CSO does not accept that there is an error of the size or in the direction suggested. The CSO is always looking for ways of improving its procedures and, as announced in its programme strategies released on 19 April, has a continuing programme to improve this and other parts of the balance of payments statistics. There have already been major improvements in recent years with a progress report published in "Economic Trends" in December 1992. Balancing items—errors and omissions —have been very much smaller in recent years.

Tiger Products

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 19 April, *Official Report*, columns *424-25*, (1) what has happened to the tiger products seized by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise;

(2) if he will provide names and addresses of importers attempting to bring tiger products into the United Kingdom;

(3) what prosecutions have been concluded or entered against those attempting to import tiger products into the United Kingdom.

Sir John Cope: The seized tiger derivatives listed in my previous answers were either destroyed or have been retained by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise for display and training purposes. In the cases in question, there was no suggestion of deliberate evasion of the endangered species controls. The importers were not prosecuted and it would be inappropriate to provide their details.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Vandalism

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the costs involved for repairing damage resulting from vandalism by prisoners at each prison in England and Wales in each of the past five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. John McFall, dated 25 April 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the costs of repairing damage resulting from vandalism by prisoners at prisons in England and Wales in each of the past five years.

Our records do not show what proportion of general expenditure on works and repairs (which amounted in each financial year from, and including, 1988-89, to £103·8 million, £107·4 million, £111·8 million, £122·5 million to £94·0 million) was incurred on repairs of damage caused by vandalism by prisoners.

Licensing Laws

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes he expects to make in licensing restrictions and hours in pubs and night clubs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill provides for a system of children's certificates for suitable bar premises in England and Wales. Action on other proposals for liquor licensing reform following the consultation paper on this subject which we published in March 1993 is under consideration.

Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the system introduced on 1 April for the formal training of project licence applicants under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Mr. Charles Wardle: From 1 April 1994 applicants for personal licences will be required to have completed successfully an accredited training programme. In addition to this, from 1 April 1995, those project licence applicants seeking a project licence for the first time will require further pre-licensing training to be acquired from accredited training programmes. Home Office policy on

education and training is set out at appendix IV of the "Report of the Animal Procedures Committee for 1992" (Cm 2301).

Tuberculosis (HM Prison Holloway)

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners at HM prison Holloway have been diagnosed as having tuberculosis; and in how many cases it has been judged that infection took place while in custody.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 25 April 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the number of tuberculosis cases that have been diagnosed in Holloway prison, and whether it is judged that the infection was contracted in custody.

The health care centre records show that four prisoners at Holloway have been diagnosed as suffering from tuberculosis; two were diagnosed in 1992 and two in 1993. None of these prisoners was considered to be at the infectious open pulmonary stage of the disease and the indications are that none could have contracted the disease while in custody.

Diver Mist

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which civil and emergency authorities will participate in the Diver Mist nuclear weapons accident exercise on 18 to 22 April in East Anglia.

Mr. Hanley: I have been asked to reply.

The exercise took place at Barnham in Suffolk. The relevant police, fire, ambulance, health and local authorities participated, in addition to local representation from central Government Departments.

PRIME MINISTER

Classless Society

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Prime Minister what progress he has so far achieved towards his objective of a classless society.

The Prime Minister: The Government's policies are aimed at widening choice and opportunity for all members of society. Significant progress has been made in achieving this aim through the reforms in education and health, through training and enterprise councils—which are providing greater opportunities to obtain vocational skills and qualifications, including the introduction later this year of prototypes for modern apprenticeships—and through other public service initiatives, such as the continued development of the citizens charter and the recent changes in the honours system.

Special Advisers

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the role of special advisers employed by Government; what restrictions are imposed upon party political aspects of their duties; and what plans he has to introduce new guidelines or regulations relating to their role.

The Prime Minister: There are two categories of special adviser: political advisers, who assist Ministers with that part of their work which is partly governmental and partly political, and expert advisers, who complement advice given to Ministers by their Departments with that drawn from their particular professional fields and expertise. In the course of their duties, advisers are subject to the same rules of conduct as other civil servants. Special advisers are bound generally by the rules on political activity applicable to civil servants, with specific exemptions. They may, with the approval of their Minister, attend party functions and maintain contact with party members, and take part in policy reviews conducted by their party. In addition, and also subject to approval by their Minister, special advisers are allowed to undertake all forms of local political activity, apart from local activities in support of national political activities. I have no plans to introduce new guidelines or regulations relating to their role.

D-day Anniversary

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister what representations his office has had from the Royal British Legion in regard to the arrangements being made by the Government to mark the 50th anniversary of the D-day landings; what reply has been sent; what action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 21 April 1994]:* The Royal British Legion has written to my office about the 50th anniversary of the end of world war II and was sent a full reply on 21 April.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Water Quality (Exhibition)

Sir Jim Spicer: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to water quality and value to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 3 to 7 May.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Foodstuffs

Mr. Devlin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of foodstuffs imported into the United Kingdom come ready packaged for retail sale.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is not available as packaged foodstuffs are not separately identified in the standard international trade classification.

Nuclear Power

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what efforts are being made by the British Government to encourage those countries of the former Soviet Union and the eastern bloc who have not done so to sign the Vienna convention on civil liabilities for nuclear damage or to

agree waivers of liability with British companies involved in upgrading their nuclear reactors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: A number of eastern European countries have recently joined the Vienna convention and more are in the process of doing so. In recent visits to Bulgaria and Russia, a senior official of my Department has raised the matter. Until those countries have a sound legal framework for civil liability, we support the development of indemnity agreements. The European Commission is at present negotiating with the Governments of Russia and Ukraine to indemnify European contractors under the EU nuclear safety assistance programme.

Local Government Legislation

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the Acts of Parliament and Consolidation Acts that affect local government that have been introduced by his Department since 1990.

Mr. Heseltine: The following Acts of Parliament that affect local government have been introduced by this Department, including the Department of Energy, since 1990:

The Coal Mining Subsidence Act 1991
The European Economic Area Act 1993
The Property Misdescriptions Act 1991
The Timeshare Act 1992

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. McMaster: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many parliamentary questions to his Department have not been answered because of disproportionate costs or because the information requested was not held centrally over the last five years; how many could be answered now due to computerisation and/or more effective operational systems; and if he will list each such question along with the name and constituency of the hon. Member who tabled it.

Mr. Heseltine: Over the period 1 April 1989 to 31 March 1994, there have been 119 parliamentary questions which my Department has not answered because of disproportionate costs or because the information was not held centrally. The remainder of the question could be answered only at disproportionate cost.

Nuclear Energy Review

Mr. Spellar: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 13 April, *Official Report* column *226*, what representations he has received as to the effect of the timing of his announcement of the nuclear energy review on the forward planning of the nuclear industry.

Mr. Eggar: I have received a number of representations about the timing, format and scope of the nuclear review from hon. Members, the nuclear industry, members of the public and other interested parties.

Offshore Oil and Gas Licensing

Mr. Thomason: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he intends to announce the next round of offshore oil and gas licensing on the United Kingdom continental shelf.

Mr. Eggar: Following the success of the 14th round, announced two years ago, I am today announcing the 15th round of offshore licensing. I am also taking the opportunity to invite nominations for the 16th round. This represents a new approach to licensing with different rounds reflecting the different stages of exploration reached in the United Kingdom continental shelf.

The overall objective remains that of encouraging exploration in the UKCS so that new fields are discovered and development continues for at least another 25 years. In order to ensure that the UKCS remains a competitive oil province, I will be expecting applicants for licences to demonstrate their commitment to competitiveness, innovation and cost reduction.

The acreage announced today makes up the 15th round. This comprises all available unlicensed acreage in the southern basin and in the central North sea. The intention of the round is to encourage early exploration in the gas prone areas. In this way, new gas discoveries can be tied into existing infrastructure.

I want to see this acreage explored quickly, with commitments from companies to early drilling in the blocks awarded. I am therefore seeking applications by 26 July with a view to announcing awards this autumn. I am very keen to see new gas developments going ahead. This "fast track" round should enable companies to make early progress. It is my intention that licensing opportunities in the more established areas should be offered, like this, on a regular basis in future.

I am also seeking nominations from oil and gas companies for blocks which they would like to see offered in the 16th round. This round will cover areas around the coast of Britain and to the north of Scotland. Nominations will be required by 26 July.

Many of the blocks in the 16th round will be in areas of environmental sensitivity or in areas where the interests of other users of the sea need to be taken into account. As in previous rounds, special conditions will need to be attached to a number of the blocks in those areas. Those conditions will be agreed with other Government Departments and with other bodies such as the Joint Nature Conservation Committee following nominations. Where blocks are in sensitive areas, I plan to ask applicants to address the environmental concerns identified in relevant surveys.

A second announcement, in the autumn, will give details of the blocks offered in the 16th round. As well as blocks nominated by companies, the round will include established acreage in the northern North sea. Any special conditions attached to individual blocks will be available at the time of this, later, announcement. In order to give time for companies to undertake the necessary preparation, applications for the 16th round will be required in March 1995 with a view to announcing awards in the summer. I will also use the second announcement to indicate my plans for a round af acreage in frontier areas, the 17th round.

I will publish tomorrow in the *London Gazette* and the *Edinburgh Gazette* and on Friday in the *Belfast Gazette*, a formal announcement giving the detailed financial terms for the 15th round, including the format of applications, the information required and the basis on which awards will be made. I shall place in the Libraries of both Houses copies of this formal announcement.

British Coal

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what financial support he will be making to British Coal to fund redundancy payments after 30 April.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 22 April 1994]:* Subject to the approval of the House to the draft Coal Industry (Restructuring Grants) Order 1994 laid on 21 April, the Government will provide restructuring grant under the Coal Industry Act 1987 to meet 90 per cent. of the cost of eligible expenditure related to the redundancy of British Coal Corporation employees.

Haulage Vehicles

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the impact on the haulage contracting businesses of the decision of insurance companies not to cover haulage vehicles and their contents if parked overnight within the M25 or in the major metropolitan areas.

Mr. Sainsbury: The DTI has made no such assessment.

EC Structural Fund

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a further statement on the implementation of objective 5b of the European Community's structural funds in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Council regulations allow the member states three months from the date of the decision on eligibility, 2[illegible] January, to draw up and present to the Commission plans describing the uses to which it is intended to put the funds' grants. For this purpose, the United Kingdom's objective 5b areas will comprise 11 plan areas. The plans are being prepared by Government Departments, with appropriate local consultation.

The Government have divided the indicative allocation, for the purposes of their plans, as follows:

Plan area	*Million ecu (1994 prices)*
South West England	219
Shorps/Herefordshire/ Worcestershire	40
Staffordshire/Derbyshire	12
Northern Uplands	108
Lincolnshire	53
East Anglia	60
Borders of Scotland	30
Dumfries and Galloway	47
Central Scotland/Tayside	25
Grampian	39
Rural Wales	184
Total United Kingdom objective 5b	817

The regulations allow a further six months to negotiate, on the basis of the plans presented, a Community support framework for each plan area. The framework will then govern the allocation and use of the funds' grants.

Only after the Community support frameworks have been negotiated and adopted can detailed decisions be taken on projects to receive grant.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Parliamentary Ombudsman

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to create a charter to cover the work of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration; and if he will make a statement on the opportunities citizens have to seek redress from the ombudsman where they believe the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner has failed to investigate a complaint in a timely fashion.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have no plans to create a charter to cover the work of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, as I have no responsibility for his work. The Parliamentary Commissioner's remit is governed by the terms of the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967. He is responsible to Parliament, via the Select Committee, and not to Ministers.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the total level of compensation paid out by Government Departments in redress of complaints made via the ombudsman in financial year 1993-94; and if he will list all payments made amounting to over £5,000.

Mr. Waldegrave: This information is not held centrally. I refer the hon. Member to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration's annual report for 1993, which contains details at appendix A of compensation paid following individual investigations completed during the 1993 calendar year. Copies of the report are available in the Libraries of the House.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

UN Peacekeeping Initiatives

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what policy initiatives he has proposed or he intends to propose to improve the quality of UN peacekeeping initiatives.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom replied to the Secretary-General's request for recommendations from member states on ways to improve peacekeeping in July 1993. A copy of this reply has been placed in the House Library. A number of these recommendations were taken up in the Secretary-General's March 1994 report on peacekeeping, a copy of which has also been placed in the House Library.

Departmental Building Refurbishment

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon: Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) of 12 April, *Official Report*, column *14*, if he will give a breakdown of the estimated total cost of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office building at King Charles street; and what considerations led him to give priority to expenditure of such a magnitude on the work.

Mr. Goodlad: Before 1988, partial refurbishment of the Foreign Office main building—Old Public Offices—was carried out by the Property Services Agency, funded from its overall provision for maintenance of the civil

estate. It is not now possible to quantify that expenditure. An investment appraisal in 1987 showed that it would be less expensive completely to refurbish the grade I listed building than to provide new accommodation for the FCO. It had not been refurbished since being first occupied by four separate Departments of State in 1875.

Responsibility was transferred from the PSA to the FCO in 1988. Expenditure has been incurred as follows:

Year	£
1988-89	5,453,170
1989-90	7,580,608
1990-91	8,483,080
1991-92	12,973,778
1992-93	11,150,596
1993-94	12,564,053
Total	58,205,285

The estimated out-turn for 1994-95 is £7·5 million.

Design work is proceeding on the final phase, which is provisionally estimated to cost about £20·3 million, including works, resources and VAT, over the 1995-96, 1996-97 and 1997-98 financial years. On completion, the building will provide modern office accommodation, meeting health and safety and fire requirements. It will also provide 25 per cent. more office space, allowing leased buildings to be given up, thus reducing future running costs and improving operational efficiency.

Greece

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the stance of Greece in respect of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation action against Bosnian Serb positions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Greece formally dissociated itself from the 9 February NATO decision on Sarajevo. However, it remains supportive of NATO's provision of close air support to UNPROFOR.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current relations between Greece and Serbia; and what assessment he has made as to the extent to which those relations are compatible with Greece's North Atlantic Treaty Organisation membership and with European Union policy.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not our policy to comment on relations between other states.

European Human Rights Court

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy regarding the permanent right of individual application to the new single court that will replace the European Commission and the European Court of Human Rights; what factors led to the adoption of this policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department on 19 April, *Official Report*, column *457*.

Russia

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last discussed British interests in Transcaucasia with the Russian Government; what is his view of Russian intentions towards the so-called Chechen Republic; and when he last discussed the situation in the northern Caucasus with the Russian Government.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs visited Moscow in February he discussed a wide range of issues with members of the Russian Government, including the internal situation in the Russian Federation and Russia's relations with her near neighbours.

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last discussed the situation in Bosnia with President Yeltsin; and what were his conclusions.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We remain in close contact with the Russians about the situation in Bosnia. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has not spoken in person to President Yeltsin recently, but he has discussed recent developments with Foreign Minister Kozyrev.

Lin Qi Qun

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 31 March, *Official Report*, column *1020*, with regard to Lin Qi Qun, wife of Mr. Chiu Hung Ing of 1 Princes parade, Manchester, when he intends to reply to the letter sent to him by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs does not appear to have received the right hon. Member's correspondence on this matter, except for a letter dated 26 October 1993 to which he replied on 10 November. My officials have asked for copies. We shall then look into this matter and write to the right hon. Member as quickly as possible.

Departmental Publications

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for how many regular publications he was responsible in 1993-94; what was their circulation; and how many were obtainable by subscription.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is responsible for a wide range of publications. A list of 93 publications is included on page 101 of the FCO departmental report for 1994 (Cm 2502), a copy of which is in the Library of the House. In addition, over 150 publications on aspects of Britain are produced each year, in various languages, for distribution by posts abroad.

To provide details of all the assorted circulations would be disproportionate to the time and cost involved. Most publications are distributed free. A few are available by subscription and others can be purchased from HMSO.

Rwanda and Burundi

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how the Foreign Office is represented in Rwanda and Burundi; and what action his representatives have been taking to alleviate distress and hardship for British and other citizens in these countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We no longer have representation in Rwanda. The honorary consul in Kigali was evacuated, with other British nationals, from Rwanda during the week beginning 10 April. The contingency arrangements with the Belgians worked well.

Currently we have no representation in Burundi. Nominally the protection of British nationals there falls to the British high commissioner in Kampala. However, British nationals seeking emergency assistance in any country where we have no permanent representation can contact the diplomatic mission or consular post of any European Union member state.

Bosnia

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which countries have pledged troops to Bosnia as a result of the United Kingdom's initiative which have so far not yet arrived; and what are their estimated dates of arrival.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Nations has received offers of 7,717 troops following our lobbying exercise. Of these, Security Council authority exists only for a further deployment of 5,802 troops. So far British—905—French —300—and Spanish—170—contingents have been deployed. The deployment of Russian—300—and Ukranian —555—contingents are in train, the Swedes—165—are expected to deploy in early May and the Pakistanis—3,000 —are expected to deploy in July. We have no information about the deployment of the remainder.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Commissioners' Assets

Mr. Cormack: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners if he will make a statement giving details of the steps that have been taken by the commissioners, and are proposed, following the decrease in value of the commissioners' assets.

Mr. Michael Alison: The Commissioners' board of governors has taken a number of steps to strengthen the commissioners' financial management and accountability. The board's actions come as a direct result of the recommendations of the Lambeth report and are part of a vigorous process, overseen by a steering group of the board, to address all the issues raised in it.

- The board has strengthened its relationship with the commissioners' assets committee through general rules under which the assets committee is to work. These rules offer direction and guidance to the assets committee and reinforce the link between the two bodies. They provide, among other things, for the assets committee to review, at least annually with external professional advice, asset allocation and investment performance and for the committee to report quarterly to the board.
- An Audit Committee has been established. Alan McLintock CA, chairman of the Church's central board of finance, is chairman and Derek Fellows, FIA is a member, neither are commissioners, thus ensuring the independent membership recommended by the Lambeth report. The committee is responsible, among other things, for considering matters relating to the audit and for reviewing the effectiveness of internal management controls, the implementation of investment policies and decisions and accounting policies and practices.
- In January the commissioners appointed a new deputy secretary, finance and investment.
- The firm of DTZ Debenham Thorpe has been appointed as independent valuer for the commercial property portfolio. The commissioner acknowledge that their asset base is too heavily weighted towards property and their long-term aim is to redress this imbalance. With this in mind, the assets committee's property sub-group is reviewing the commissioners' property interests with the benefit of a recent report on the portfolio from DTZ.
- Watsons has been appointed as the commissioners' independent consultant actuaries. It will advise on the commissioners' liabilities for pensions and other expenditure, as well as investment strategy and management. The commissioners and the Church of England pensions board will discuss the future funding of clergy pensions with dioceses in the coming months.
- The commissioners have also taken steps, after extensive consultations with dioceses and others, to reduce their expenditure commitments to a sustainable level through a programme of phased cuts in their contributions towards clergy pay and housing. The precise scope and amount of future cuts will be the subject of further consultations.
- The commissioners are scrutinising their own administrative costs and have embarked on a review of each of their activities to ensure they are necessary and that they are carried out cost effectively.

My hon. Friend will be pleased to know that provisional year end figures for 1993 show an increase of about 10 per cent. in the value of the commissioners' assets.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Air Crashes

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Attorney-General how many of his staff have been allocated to duties relating to air crashes.

The Attorney-General: No member of my chambers is specifically allocated to duties relating to air crashes.

Crown Prosecuters' Code

Mr. Heald: To ask the Attorney-General when he expects to complete the new code for crown prosecutors.

The Attorney-General: The publication of the code for crown prosecutors is a matter for the Director of Public Prosecutions. As I announced to the House on 15 December last year, the code is presently being reviewed in order to simplify its language and to make it a document which is more easily understood by police officers and

members of the public who are not lawyers. The limited public consultation phase has just been completed and the director, with her staff, are presently considering the responses which have been received. I understand that the director is hoping to publish the code in the early summer.

Residence Test

Mr. Madden: To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received from his counterparts in the European Union regarding the proposal to introduce a test of habitual residence in the United Kingdom affecting EC nationals seeking work in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: None.

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Duncan Smith: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the activities of the Crown Prosecution Service.

The Solicitor-General: The main activity of the Crown Prosecution Service is the efficient and effective prosecution of criminal cases.

Racial Crimes

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attorney-General what are the prosecution policies in respect of racial crimes.

The Attorney-General: The code for crown prosecutors provides that a clear racial motivation for an offence should be regarded as an aggravating feature pointing towards prosecution, provided that the evidence is sufficient for there to be a realistic prospect of conviction.

EMPLOYMENT

Human Resource Management

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will place in the Library a copy of the National Audit Office's report into the human resource management in the employment department group.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Although the National Audit Office undertook a study of the Department's human resource management in 1992 it decided not to publish the results of this examination.

North Yorkshire Training and Enterprise Council

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much was spent by North Yorkshire training and enterprise council in 1993-94; and what is its budget for 1994-95.

Miss Widdecombe: The total amount spent by North Yorkshire training and enterprise council in 1993-94 was £16,103,574. The budget for 1994-95 is £18,980,931.

Passive Smoking

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what research he has commissioned into health risks from passive smoking in the workplace; and what have been the conclusions.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None. Workplace risks do not differ from those from passive smoking generally which were reviewed by the Independent Scientific Committee on Smoking and Health. The findings were published in the committee's fourth report. The need for further research is kept under regular review.

Manufacturing Industry Pay

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the average weekly earnings in manufacturing industry in the north-east and the south-east over the last five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information is available for standard statistical regions. The north-east is part of the north region. The latest available information for the north, south-east, Greater London and the south-east excluding Greater London, is provided in the following table:

Average gross weekly earnings of full-time employees in manufacturing on adult rates whose pay was unaffected by absence: in April of each year

Year	*North*	*South-east*	*Greater London*	*South-east excluding Greater London*
	£	£	£	£
1989	229·9	275·3	295·7	265·4
1990	250·3	303·4	329·3	291·1
1991	267·4	323·8	349·7	311·5
1992	289·1	345·0	374·6	332·1
1993	299·4	365·6	397·7	352·0

Source: New Earnings Survey.

First Aid Packs

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what enactments of the European Community determine to limit the contents of first aid packs suitable for places of employment; and which of them include limitations on the inclusion of scissors or other sharp instruments.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Various enactments of the European Community make provision for first aid in the workplace but none specify the contents of first aid packs.

Objective 3 Programme

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much was allocated to the voluntary sector in each of the past two years in Scotland through the use of European social fund objective 3 programme *(a)* in total and *(b)* per project.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is set out for voluntary sector objective 3—the long-time unemployed —projects in Scotland:

	ESF £ million	Number of projects
1992	5·23	66
1993	7·55	93

The figures for 1992 are for amounts claimed in total: the figures for 1993 are four amounts approved. The amount claimed per project varies significantly and could be produced only by manual scrutiny at disproportionate cost.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many representations he has received in connection with the delay of allocation of European social fund objective 3 programme in Scotland for the year January to December 1994; and if he will make a statement as to the future allocation;

(2) when he expects to announce the outcome of negotiations on the voluntary sector budget for January to December 1994 in Scotland in connection with European social fund objective 3.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received 15 representations from Scotland in connection with the delay in making allocations for the European social fund objective 3 programme. The European Commission is still considering the Great Britain objective 3 plan which was submitted to it last November. Although the Government have pressed consistently for speedy progress, formal negotiations are only just beginning. It will not be possible to agree sectoral allocations until annual funding allocations and priorities for support have been confirmed.

EDUCATION

Pupils (Drug Abuse)

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many pupils have been permanently excluded from schools in the north Yorkshire area for drug abuse in each of the past five years.

Mr. Forth: Figures for each of the past five years are not available. Information on permanent exclusions from maintained schools in England was collected by the Department over a two-year period, starting with the summer term 1990, under the national exclusions reporting system. In England, 81 pupils were excluded for drug-related offences and solvent abuse in year one and 179 in year two. It is not possible to provide an area breakdown of the figures because of assurances given as to confidentiality.

Schools (Exclusion of Pupils)

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many pupils have been permanently excluded from schools in each of the London boroughs in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Forth: Figures for each of the past 10 years are not available. Information on permanent exclusions from maintained schools in England was collected by the Department over a two-year period, starting with the summer term 1990, under the national exclusions reporting system. In England, 2,910 pupils were excluded in year one and 3,833 in year two. It is not possible to provide an area breakdown of the figures because of assurances given as to confidentiality.

Departmental Publications

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education for how many regular publications he was responsible in 1993-94; what was their circulation; and how many were obtainable by subscription.

Mr. Forth: The Department for Education produces four regular publications.

Schools Update, a free newsletter for teachers and governors, is produced and distributed to schools in England once per term, (i.e. three times a year). It is also sent to individuals who have asked to receive copies. The circulation is approximately 300,000.

Inside Story, an in-house staff journal, is produced bi-monthly and distributed to DFE staff. The circulation is 2,200.

Education Publications, a list of publications and press releases issued by the Department, is produced monthly. The circulation is 634.

DFE Circulars and Green Papers, a listing, is produced monthly. The circulation is approximately 100.

Schools Update and *Inside Story* are free publications. The others are available by subscription. *Inside Story* was launched in September 1993. The other titles ran throughout the year.

Rising-fives

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the authorities which maintain a full system of admitting rising-fives to primary school and those who admit no rising-fives at all; and what information he has on intermediate systems.

Mr. Robin Squire: Information is not available in the form requested. Most primary schools and local education authorities now have a policy of admitting children as rising-fives or earlier and in every authority in England in 1993 some children were admitted to primary schools on that basis.

School Rolls, Greenwich

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many children were on the roll *(a)* of Linton Mead and *(b)* Hawksmoor schools in the London borough of Greenwich on the last day of spring term March 1994 and the first day of summer term April 1994; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend understands that there were 150 pupils on roll at Linton Mead school and 190 at Hawksmoor on the last day of the spring term 1994. Numbers on the first day of the summer term at each school were 165 and 189 respectively.

Statemented Children

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list by local education authority for 1984 and the latest date for which information is available *(a)* the number of educational psychologists employed, *(b)* the ratio of educational psychologists to school age children, *(c)* the number of children with statements and *(d)* the ratio of children with statements to the school-age population.

Mr. Forth: The information requested for each of the years 1985 and 1993, the earliest and latest dates for which information is readily available, is shown in the tables.

Educational psychologists and children with statements of special educational needs maintained by each LEA in England (January 1993)

LEA	All pupils in schools	Educational psychologists: Full-time equivalent	Educational psychologists: Per 10,000 pupils in schools[2]	Children for whom a statement of special educational needs is maintained by the LEA: Number[1]	Children for whom a statement of special educational needs is maintained by the LEA: Per 10,000 pupils in schools[2]
Corporation of London	1,795	0·0	0·00	5	27·9
Camden	27,541	7·0	2·54	508	184·5
Greenwich	38,182	12·0	3·14	1,200	314·3
Hackney	28,246	7·5	2·66	1,027	363·6
Hammersmith and Fulham	19,605	7·0	3·57	497	253·5
Islington	23,295	9·0	3·86	567	243·4
Kensington and Chelsea	21,053	8·0	3·80	285	135·4
Lambeth	28,366	11·1	3·91	598	210·8
Lewisham	35,601	10·0	2·81	912	256·2
Southwark	36,788	10·5	2·85	814	221·3
Tower Hamlets	33,841	8·5	2·51	829	345·0
Wandsworth	33,088	10·0	3·02	920	278·0
Westminster	22,616	6·0	2·65	523	231·3
Barking and Dagenham	25,373	8·5	3·35	404	159·2
Barnet	49,462	14·5	2·93	781	157·9
Bexley	34,112	6·5	1·91	873	255·9
Brent	37,168	8·5	2·29	629	169·2
Bromley	43,202	10·0	2·31	946	219·0
Croydon	52,305	11·8	2·26	992	189·7
Ealing	45,378	10·8	2·38	1,024	225·7
Enfield	42,479	14·0	3·30	397	93·5
Haringey	31,106	10·8	3·47	479	154·0
Harrow	32,474	10·0	3·08	594	182·9
Havering	36,552	9·7	2·65	671	183·6
Hillingdon	37,753	9·8	2·60	423	112·0
Hounslow	34,493	6·0	1·74	1,038	300·9
Kingston-upon-Thames	21,623	4·0	1·85	437	202·1
Merton	26,387	7·6	2·88	706	267·6
Newham	41,018	10·2	2·49	794	193·6
Redbridge	38,043	8·4	2·21	681	179·0
Richmond-upon-Thames	25,040	6·0	2·40	491	196·1
Sutton	26,232	4·0	1·52	673	256·6
Waltham Forest	34,980	7·0	2·00	672	192·1
Birmingham	186,603	31·5	1·69	3,598	192·8
Coventry	52,194	12·0	2·30	1,025	196·4
Dudley	47,308	7·1	1·50	940	198·7
Sandwell	52,058	14·0	2·69	660	126·8
Solihull	37,788	8·4	2·22	713	188·7
Walsall	49,300	10·0	2·03	951	192·9
Wolverhampton	44,517	9·0	2·02	1,044	234·5
Knowsley	28,566	5·8	2·03	810	283·6
Liverpool	85,654	18·0	2·10	2,092	244·2
St. Helens	31,189	9·0	2·89	1,020	327·0
Sefton	51,055	11·0	2·15	1,119	219·2
Wirral	58,939	10·5	1·78	1,431	242·8
Bolton	48,594	7·4	1·52	823	169·4
Bury	30,656	4·6	1·50	990	322·9
Manchester	79,242	21·2	2·68	1,217	153·6
Oldham	43,496	7·0	1·61	768	176·6
Rochdale	35,982	7·5	2·08	810	225·1
Salford	39,654	7·6	1·92	445	112·2
Stockport	50,256	9·5	1·89	1,397	278·0
Tameside	38,200	8·0	2·09	1,086	284·3
Trafford	35,665	4·0	1·12	757	212·3
Wigan	51,747	6·5	1·26	1,409	272·3
Barnsley	34,221	4·5	1·31	631	184·4
Doncaster	52,278	11·0	2·10	1,112	212·7
Rotherham	44,311	9·3	2·10	1,207	272·4
Sheffield	74,487	18·2	2·44	1,483	199·1
Bradford	92,063	20·0	2·17	1,270	137·9
Calderdale	34,345	6·5	1·89	488	142·1
Kirklees	65,890	17·0	2·58	1,691	256·6
Leeds	116,599	19·0	1·63	3,011	258·2
Wakefield	55,190	10·5	1·90	1,074	194·6
Gateshead	31,711	8·5	2·68	536	169·0
Newcastle upon Tyne	46,367	11·0	2·37	1,019	219·8
North Tyneside	33,374	8·0	2·40	1,066	319·4
South Tyneside	26,125	6·0	2·30	501	191·8

LEA	All pupils in schools	Educational psychologists: Full-time equivalent	Educational psychologists: Per 10,000 pupils in schools[2]	Children for whom a statement of special educational needs is maintained by the LEA: Number[1]	Children for whom a statement of special educational needs is maintained by the LEA: Per 10,000 pupils in schools[2]
Sunderland	51,762	11·5	2·22	1,200	231·8
Isles of Scilly	282	0·0	0·00	1	35·5
Avon	152,529	25·5	1·67	4,054	265·8
Bedfordshire	96,505	15·9	1·65	2,448	253·7
Berkshire	128,493	19·5	1·52	3,009	234·2
Buckinghamshire	108,659	24·0	2·21	3,793	349·1
Cambridgeshire	109,421	16·0	1·46	1,842	168·3
Cheshire	164,525	25·3	1·54	4,154	252·5
Cleveland	109,011	16·5	1·51	2,353	215·8
Cornwall	72,987	12·0	1·64	2,571	352·3
Cumbria	78,559	19·0	2·42	2,076	264·3
Derbyshire	149,862	30·3	2·02	4,066	271·3
Devon	151,459	26·5	1·75	4,740	313·0
Dorset	95,282	20·6	2·16	2,320	243·5
Durham	100,028	24·5	2·45	2,133	213·2
East Sussex	101,216	19·7	1·95	2,200	217·4
Essex	236,202	42·3	1·79	5,067	214·5
Gloucestershire	85,011	17·4	2·05	2,070	243·5
Hampshire	241,328	54·8	2·27	6,802	281·9
Hereford and Worcester	109,495	16·0	1·46	1,676	153·1
Hertfordshire	172,273	33·0	1·92	4,145	240·6
Humberside	149,240	24·0	1·61	2,373	159·0
Isle of Wight	19,005	3·0	1·58	391	205·7
Kent	251,214	40·5	1·61	6,008	239·2
Lancashire	230,232	40·2	1·75	6,556	284·8
Leicestershire	150,771	32·6	2·16	n/a	n/a
Lincolnshire	91,813	13·0	1·42	2,810	306·1
Norfolk	111,564	19·0	1·70	3,060	274·3
North Yorkshire	113,766	19·0	1·67	2,193	192·8
Northamptonshire	103,060	19·0	1·84	1,983	192·4
Northumberland	51,155	11·0	2·11	1,200	230·1
Nottinghamshire	164,830	30·5	1·85	1,934	117·3
Oxfordshire	89,774	14·5	1·62	1,521	169·4
Shropshire	69,257	11·6	1·67	2,112	305·0
Somerset	73,998	11·1	1·50	1,594	215·4
Staffordshire	171,943	28·4	1·65	3,699	215·1
Suffolk	100,542	14·0	1·39	2,704	268·9
Surrey	158,228	32·3	2·04	4,449	281·2
Warwickshire	79,728	12·7	1·59	1,458	182·9
West Sussex	107,039	17·1	1·60	1,930	180·3
Wiltshire	87,914	13·3	1·51	3,419	388·9
ENGLAND	7,841,783	1,540·9	1·96	176,698	225·3

[1] Derived from returns received from LEAs—Special Educational Needs Survey (SEN 2) 1993. Includes children in maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special schools; non-maintained special and independent schools and children being educated otherwise than in a school.
[2] Divisor includes pupils in maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special schools, and non-maintained special and independent schools.
n/a Information not available for Leicestershire LEA.

Educational psychologists and children with statements of special educational needs maintained by each LEA in England (January 1985)

LEA	All pupils in schools	Educational psychologists: Full-time equivalent	Educational psychologists: Per 10,000 pupils in schools[2]	Children for whom a statement of special educational needs is maintained by the LEA: Number[1]	Children for whom a statement of special educational needs is maintained by the LEA: Per 10,000 pupils in schools[2]
Barking and Dagenham	24,916	7·0	2·81	384	154·1
Barnet	47,108	8·5	1·80	644	136·7
Bexley	34,661	5·0	1·44	713	205·7
Brent	36,652	9·6	2·62	[3]—	[3]—
Bromley	44,604	8·0	1·79	766	171·7
Croydon	57,297	9·0	1·72	791	151·3
Ealing	42,923	5·4	1·26	513	119·5
Enfield	41,229	9·0	2·18	779	188·9
Haringey	30,142	7·0	2·32	556	184·5
Harrow	31,923	6·0	1·88	596	186·7
Havering	39,504	8·0	2·03	626	158·5
Hillingdon	37,805	5·0	1·32	698	184·6
Hounslow	33,089	5·9	1·78	12	3·6
Kingston upon Thames	21,227	2·0	0·94	340	160·2
Merton	26,278	5·0	1·90	160	60·9

LEA	All pupils in schools	Educational psychologists: Full-time equivalent	Educational psychologists: Per 10,000 pupils in schools[2]	Children for whom a statement of special educational needs is maintained by the LEA: Number[1]	Children for whom a statement of special educational needs is maintained by the LEA: Per 10,000 pupils in schools[2]
Newham	37,848	11·0	2·91	755	199·5
Redbridge	34,390	6·0	1·74	724	210·5
Richmond upon Thames	22,934	4·0	1·74	305	133·0
Sutton	25,050	4·0	1·60	190	75·8
Waltham Forest	35,130	8·0	2·28	716	203·8
Birmingham	184,359	37·2	2·02	3,478	188·7
Coventry	55,309	12·3	2·22	1,232	222·7
Dudley	49,963	7·5	1·50	908	181·7
Sandwell	54,299	8·0	1·47	1,103	203·1
Solihull	38,072	7·3	1·92	84	22·1
Walsall	52,349	7·0	1·34	777	148·4
Wolverhampton	48,014	6·0	1·25	720	150·0
Knowsley	31,238	7·0	2·24	348	111·4
Liverpool	88,435	15·5	1·75	1,663	188·0
St. Helens	34,913	4·0	1·15	647	185·3
Sefton	53,157	9·0	1·69	581	109·3
Wirral	60,362	8·0	1·33	1,277	211·6
Bolton	49,842	4·0	0·80	675	135·4
Bury	30,558	3·5	1·15	507	165·9
Manchester	79,867	14·0	1·75	345	43·2
Oldham	41,485	5·0	1·21	661	159·3
Rochdale	38,674	9·0	2·33	618	159·8
Salford	42,680	6·0	1·41	815	191·0
Stockport	51,685	6·7	1·30	862	166·8
Tameside	38,065	7·0	1·84	669	175·8
Trafford	34,995	3·0	0·86	278	79·4
Wigan	57,079	8·0	1·40	108	18·9
Barnsley	39,441	4·0	1·01	443	112·3
Doncaster	53,271	9·0	1·69	14	2·6
Rotherham	47,218	9·0	1·91	844	178·7
Sheffield	85,230	13·6	1·60	1,383	162·3
Bradford	88,613	14·0	1·58	1,391	157·0
Calderdale	34,956	2·0	0·57	338	96·7
Kirklees	70,252	12·0	1·71	929	132·2
Leeds	120,865	13·5	1·12	1,038	85·9
Wakefield	57,486	6·0	1·04	981	170·7
Gateshead	33,838	8·0	2·36	598	176·7
Newcastle upon Tyne	46,882	12·0	2·56	882	188·1
North Tyneside	33,870	8·0	2·36	604	178·3
South Tyneside	26,577	6·0	2·26	467	175·7
Sunderland	55,941	9·0	1·61	1,000	178·8
Isles of Scilly	287	0·0	0·00	[3]—	[3]—
Inner London	332,916	87·7	2·63	7,349	220·7
Avon	155,467	28·6	1·84	617	39·7
Bedfordshire	94,075	12·0	1·28	1,529	162·5
Berkshire	129,156	17·3	1·34	2,121	164·2
Buckinghamshire	106,670	16·0	1·50	2,859	268·0
Cambridgeshire	105,133	12·0	1·14	1,252	119·1
Cheshire	165,879	17·0	1,02	3,468	209·1
Cleveland	109,668	18·0	1·64	2,290	208·8
Cornwall	72,603	8·0	1·10	965	132·9
Cumbria	82,187	9·0	1·10	1,353	164·6
Derbyshire	156,355	21·5	1·38	2,698	172·6
Devon	149,133	20·4	1·37	2,807	188·2
Dorset	92,600	14·5	1·57	1,590	171·7
Durham	104,981	17·4	1·66	1,569	149·5
East Sussex	97,571	11·8	1·21	1,766	181·0
Essex	250,118	31·4	1·26	4,555	182·1
Gloucestershire	87,235	11·0	1·26	483	55·4
Hampshire	244,958	31·5	1·29	5,252	214·4
Hereford and Worcester	112,025	11·0	0·98	14	1·2
Hertfordshire	179,696	21·5	1·20	3,472	193·2
Humberside	152,528	21·0	1·38	2,417	158·5
Isle of Wight	19,004	3·0	1·58	317	166·8
Kent	252,808	19·0	0·75	5,137	203·2
Lancashire	235,132	34·0	1·45	4,708	200·2
Leicestershire	151,164	19·0	1·26	1,797	118·9
Lincolnshire	91,827	10·0	1·09	2,001	217·9
Norfolk	114,594	14·0	1·22	1,494	130·4
North Yorkshire	113,740	15·2	1·34	1,723	151·5
Northamptonshire	101,392	15·0	1·48	1,858	183·2
Northumberland	51,380	4·1	0·80	806	156·9
Nottinghamshire	171,777	30·0	1·75	2,617	152·3

LEA	All pupils in schools	Educational psychologists: Full-time equivalent	Educational psychologists: Per 10,000 pupils in schools[2]	Children for whom a statement of special educational needs is maintained by the LEA: Number[1]	Children for whom a statement of special educational needs is maintained by the LEA: Per 10,000 pupils in schools[2]
Oxfordshire	90,417	12·5	1·38	1,046	115·7
Shropshire	70,551	8·0	1·13	780	110·6
Somerset	75,157	9·0	1·20	1,320	175·6
Staffordshire	177,835	17·7	1·00	2,671	150·2
Suffolk	102,989	13·0	1·26	1,532	148·8
Surrey	165,910	22·0	1·33	3,384	204·0
Warwickshire	84,128	9·8	1·16	1,547	183·9
West Sussex	106,569	12·0	1·13	1,394	130·8
Wiltshire	88,570	13·0	1·47	1,795	202·7
England	7,955,735	1,173·4	1·47	127,889	160·8

[1] Derived from returns from LEAs—Special Educational Needs Survey (SEN 2) 1985. Includes children in maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special schools; non-maintained special and independent schools and children being educated otherwise than in a school.
[2] Divisor includes pupils in maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special schools; and non-maintained special and independent schools.
[3] Information not available.

Grant-maintained Publication Centre

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the total cost in the last financial year of the Department's grant-maintained publication centre; and what part of that total cost relates to the freephone number.

Mr. Robin Squire: The grant-maintained publication centre was set-up in January 1994. The total cost to the end of March is £34,000, including VAT. Of this, £6,000 relates to the cost of setting up the freephone number and the handling of calls by the contractor. These figures do not include the cost of call charges still to be billed by British Telecom.

Going GM Conferences

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total expenditure on travel and subsistence costs of civil servants attending the Going GM conferences at Darlington, Manchester, Newcastle and Huddersfield in February and March.

Mr. Robin Squire: Those costs are recorded with all other travel and subsistence costs for civil servants in the Department. Disaggregated costs could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

St. Paul's Church of England Primary School

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects to make a decision about the funding of the nursery class in St. Paul's Church of England primary school in Hammersmith.

Mr. Robin Squire: Those proposals were approved by my right hon. Friend on 18 April 1994.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Transport Licensing

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy to keep the Transport Licensing Enforcement Division separate from the driver and vehicle licensing authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tim Smith: There is a commitment on Government when undertaking the three-year review of the Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency to consider whether the enforcement function provided by Department of the Environment should be undertaken by the agency. This review is due to be completed early in 1995 and it would therefore not be appropriate to anticipate the outcome at this stage.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the role of the transport licensing enforcement division; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tim Smith: The role of the Transport Licensing and Enforcement Branch is to ensure that hauliers and passenger carrying operators who operate for reward are suitably licensed and conform with the conditions of their licences, and that their vehicles are roadworthy.

Glanders

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of cases of glanders and farcy in each year since 1985.

Mr. Ancram: There has been no cases of glanders or farcy recorded in Northern Ireland since 1913.

Right to Silence

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received from the Chief Constable of Northern Ireland concerning the right to silence; what specific issues have been raised with him by the Chief Constable relating to the proposed changes to the present criminal justice and public order legislation in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Wheeler: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the "right of silence" provisions contained in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill. My right hon. and learned Friend has received no representations from the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary about the provisions on inferences from silence contained in the Bill.

Benefits (Residence Test)

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to abandon proposals for introducing the habitual residence test for income support and housing benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The Government have referred a proposal for a habitual residence test in the income support and housing benefit schemes to the Social Security Advisory Committee. The Government will consider all representations made once the committee's report has been completed.

Hospital Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average number of *(a)* beds available and *(b)* new accident and emergency cases during 1993-94, by regional health and personal social services board; and what were the figures per 1,000 population.

Mr. Ancram: Information is shown in the table and relates to the period 1 January 1993 to 31 December 1993, which is the latest year for which information is held centrally.

Health and Social Services Boards	*Total average available beds*[1]	*First attendances at Accident and Emergency Departments*	*Total average available beds per 1,000*[2] *population*	*First attendances at Accident and Emergency Departments per 1,000 population*
Eastern	5,304	249,010	8	382
Northern	1,855	89,698	5	224
Southern	2,019	71,781	7	245
Western	1,910	60,747	7	229

[1] Available beds cover acute and all other specialities but do not include beds open day only.
[2] As hospitals particularly in the Eastern Board area and to a lesser extent in the Western area, provide some services for patients from all parts of Northern Ireland, care should be taken when interpreting available bed figures per 1,000 population.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentages of ambulances in each service in Northern Ireland responded within *(a)* eight minutes and *(b)* 14 to 20 minutes to emergency calls in 1993-94.

Mr. Ancram: The percentage of emergency ambulance calls responded to by each of the four ambulance services in Northern Ireland within eight minutes in the period 1 April 1993 to 31 December 1993 were:

	Per cent.
Eastern Ambulance Service HSS Trust	54
Northern health and social services board	56
Southern health and social services board	58
Western health and social services board	60

Figures on the percentage of emergency ambulance calls responded to between 14 and 20 minutes are not available as the charter standards in Northern Ireland, based on population density, are set at 18 minutes—rural category—and 21 minutes—sparsely populated category. The percentage of emergency ambulance calls responded to by each of the four ambulance services in Northern Ireland within 18 to 21 minutes in the period 1 April 1993 to 31 December 1993 were:

	Per cent.
Eastern Ambulance Service HSS Trust	[1]93
Northern health and social services board	[2]96
Southern health and social services board	[1]95
Western health and social services board	[2]94

[1]based on 18-minute target.
[2]based on 21-minute target.

Figures for the last quarter of 1993-94 are not yet available.

SCOTLAND

Glasgow Eastern Area Renewal

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total amount of Government money spent in the east end of Glasgow during the lifetime of the Glasgow eastern area renewal project and since then to date.

Mr. Stewart: Scottish Enterprise suggests that from 1976 until the completion of the GEAR project in 1987, the Scottish Development Agency spent £70·4 million in the area. It estimates that a further £44·8 million was spent during the period 1987 to 1991 on the areas included in the GEAR project.

Expenditure by the Glasgow development agency in the east end of Glasgow has been £11·4 million for the period April 1991 to March 1994.

Private Security Firms

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many private security firms have been employed by his Department for each of the last 10 years; what has been the annual value of the contracts; and if he will estimate how many guards have been employed for each of those years.

Mr. Lang: The information is set out in the table.

Year	*Number of firms*	*Annual value of contracts*	*Number of guards*
1984-85	1	68,384	2·0
1985-86	1	70,468	2·0
1986-87	3	261,306	20·0
1987-88	3	294,229	20·0
1988-89	4	515,982	46·5
1989-90	4	740,430	66·0
1990-91	4	925,331	86·0
1991-92	8	1,042,070	84·0
1992-93	8	1,079,105	88·0
1993-94	11	1,255,769	95·0

Medical Teaching and Research

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to review the allocation of additional costs of teaching and research; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 20 April 1994]:* The additional cost of teaching and research element in health boards' revenue allocations is currently under review. The NHS management executive will consult health boards, NHS trusts and universities on its proposals following the review.

Enterprise Companies

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what regulations, codes of practice and or guidelines govern the party political activity of senior paid employees, including chief executives and directors, of Scottish Enterprise and enterprise companies; how these differ from those which govern principal and chief officers of local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 21 April 1994]:* The party political activities of all Scottish Enterprise employees, including the staff and chief executives of local enterprise companies, are constrained by the conditions of their employment as set out in the code of conduct on political activities contained in the employees' handbook provided by Scottish Enterprise.

The code of conduct provides that staff are free to participate in political activities providing such activity does not interfere with the employee's work or take place in working time or on Scottish Enterprise premises, and providing it has the approval of his or her employers. In particular, staff who participate in political activities are required to make it clear that they are doing so in a personal capacity, to refrain from making public use of confidential information gained through their employment, and to refrain from commenting on any policy relating to the activities of their employer.

The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 introduced disqualification and political restrictions on certain officials within local government on the basis that it has long been accepted by successive Governments that senior local government officers should be, and be seen to be, politically impartial. In addition to the provisions contained in the 1989 Act, various regulations have been made, including the Local Government Officers (Political Restrictions) Regulations 1990 and the Local Government (Politically Restricted Posts) Regulations 1990, as amended. Essentially, the effect of the legislation is that local government officers will be subject to similar, although somewhat less restrictive, rules to those which already apply to civil servants.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

China

34. **Mr. Gapes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance Her Majesty's Government are giving to China through *(a)* the aid budget and *(b)* the aid and trade provisions in the current year.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Expenditure on technical co-operation in 1992-93 was £8·45 million. Expenditure on aid and trade provision support in 1992-93 was £26·471 million.

South Africa

35. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the United Kingdom is doing to help the training of the police and crowd control marshals in South Africa during the election period.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have helped to train over 3,000 crowd control marshals and 20,000 peace monitors as part of a total contribution to peacekeeping of £3 million. We have funded a training course on policing policy for potential future policy makers.

Natural Resources Institute

36. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are his plans for the future development of the Natural Resources Institute.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As I said in reply to a written question from the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on 19 April, *Official Report*, columns *495-96*, a study of options for the future ownership of the institute is presently under way. The institute is also being restructured.

Development Policy

37. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has held on the place of armaments in development policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Arms have no place in development policy. The United Kingdom has taken part in discussions in a number of international fora, including the OECD's Development Assistance Committee and the European Community, on the negative effects of excessive military spending on development.

Tanzania

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what specific measures are being discussed between his Department and the World bank regarding the protection of the poorest in Tanzania following the introduction of user charges and insurance schemes for health services.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Government of Tanzania have agreed, following discussion with Her Majesty's Government and the World bank, that patients will be exempted from payment for certain services, such as chronic disease and all preventive services. Those genuinely unable to pay for other services will be granted exemption. We have provided technical assistance to assist the Government of Tanzania in this process. The issue of compulsory health insurance remains under discussion.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice the Overseas Development Administration has given to the Tanzanian Government regarding protection for those who cannot afford to pay for health care.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We funded a nationwide survey which demonstrated that the poor are already paying substantially for theoretically free services. Our advice to the Government of Tanzania, which has been accepted, was to increase central budget allocations for health, collect most user charges from those who can afford to pay and exempt certain categories of health care and those who are genuinely poor.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information his Department possesses on what categories of persons are exempted from charges and insurance schemes under Tanzania's new health system.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The following categories are exempt:

(i) All persons exempted from the development levy on grounds of poverty;
(ii) All preventive services and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, including HIV and AIDS;
(iii) All patients with tuberculosis, poliomyelitis, leprosy, cholera, typhoid, diabetes and psychiatric conditions.
(iv) All children under the age of 12.

Iraq

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on action to be taken in providing medicine to Iraq, following the Adjournment debate of 12 April on water-borne disease in the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are ready to consider further requests for essential medical supplies for Iraq. We will expect requests to show that delivery will be well targeted and adequately monitored. We are discussing with the British Red Cross a recent appeal from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Indonesia

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid his Department has given to the Indonesian Government since 1980.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Gross bilateral aid expenditure on Indonesia from 1 January 1980 to 31 March 1993 was £278 million. Figures for financial year 1993-94 are not yet available. Our aid supports projects in such sectors as power, forestry, railways, civil aviation, education, broadcasting and public administration.

ENVIRONMENT

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what portion of the £130 million spent on energy and fuel efficiency awareness and advice since 1990, as quoted in paragraph 8.2 of "Climate Change: the United Kingdom Programme" has been funded by his Energy Efficiency Office; and if he will list the other sources and the amounts they have contributed to the total.

Mr. Atkins: Almost all the expenditure referred to in "Climate Change: the UK Programme"—some £129 million—went towards programmes which are the responsibility of the Energy Efficiency Office. Some £250,000 was spent on other programmes, as follows: £150,000 on work associated with the climate change programme—a discussion document, discussion workshops and conferences on global warming involving private and public sector industry, publication of a climate change newsletter and sponsorship of the Atmospheric Research Information Centre—£42,000 on green brigade projects and the environmental grant fund and £62,000, spent by the Department of Transport, on publication of the "Motoring and the Environment" and "New Car Fuel Consumption" leaflets.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many parliamentary questions to his Department have not been answered because of disproportionate costs or because the information requested was not held centrally over the last five years; how many could be answered now due to computerisation and/or more effective operational systems; and if he will list each such question along with the name and constituency of the hon. Member who tabled it.

Mr. Gummer: The number of answers given to parliamentary questions over the last five years recorded in the POLIS database as including a reference to part or all of the information being available only at disproportionate cost or because the information was not held centrally was 236 out of 19,729 answered. It is not possible to say how many of these questions could now be answered due to computerisation or more effective operational systems.

Plastics

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress in replacing or reviving the second life plastics recycling scheme, and in particular the outcome of discussions between his Department, the farm plastics business in the United Kingdom and the National Farmers Union.

Mr. Atkins: My predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo), wrote last October to businesses engaged in the farm plastics films sector about the future of the pioneering second life plastics scheme. Subsequently, the Packaging and Industrial Films Association has led an intiative to design a new industry-led scheme which would maintain, and possibly expand, the collection and recovery activities established by second life plastics. I am greatly encouraged by the continuing discussions on a replacement scheme, which will need support both from the industry and from farmers. The National Farmers Union has played an active part in these discussions and initial signs are that farmers are broadly supportive of these proposals.

THORP

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what communications he received from British Nuclear Fuels plc informing him of the first-stage commissioning, by the shearing of advanced gas-cooled reactor fuel, of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield and on the public announcements made at the time.

Mr. Atkins: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution was informed by British Nuclear Fuels plc on Sunday 27 March 1994 that the first shear of irradiated fuel had taken place in the thermal oxide reprocessing plant.

BNFL made an announcement covering the event in its weekly internal newsletter.

Regional Funding (Merseyside)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will advertise for a private sector applicant for the post of head of the objective 1 executive for Merseyside.

Mr. Baldry: No.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much will be received under the objective 1 funding from the European Community; how much private funding he expects to lever into Merseyside; and what structure will be used to ensure the benefits to the region from this process will be maximised.

Mr. Baldry: The amount allocated to the objective 1 programme is 816 mecu over six years; as with other programmes of public expenditure, there is a clear intention to maximise leverage of private sector investment but it is difficult to forecast this in advance; the overall strategy for the objective 1 programme and the criteria which will be used for the selection of projects will be set by the monitoring committee.

Private Security Firms

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many private security firms have been employed by his Department for each of the last 10 years; what has been the annual value of the contracts; and if he will estimate how many guards have been employed for each of those years.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested, for the Department's main HQ buildings in London and Bristol, is set out below. Information for other, smaller buildings in the regions is not available except at disproportionate cost.

Year	*Cost (£k)*	*Firms*	*Guards*
London HQ buildings[1]			
1984-85	33	1	17
1985-86	166	2	Between 17 and 23
1986-87	179	2	Between 23 and 24
1987-88	186	2	Between 25 and 26
1988-89	255	3	Between 24 and 28
1989-90	311	2	24
1990-91	371	2	24
1991-92	404	1	Between 25 guards only and 20 guards plus 6 receptionists
1992-93	398	1	Between 18 and 20 guards and 5 and 6 receptionists
1993-94	393	1	18 guards, 5 receptionists
Bristol HQ buildings[2]			
1984-85	n/a	n/a	n/a
1985-86	37	1	5
1986-87	39	1	5
1987-88	40	1	5
1988-89	46	1	5
1989-90	50	1	5
1990-91	62	1	6
1991-92	72	1	6
1992-93	74	1	6
1993-94	78	1	6

[1] Costs are exclusive of VAT. The buildings are occupied by staff from DOE and DOT. The first contract started January 1985. Two buildings are covered throughout. A contract for a third building was let during 1985-86 but details are not available from 1988-89. A fourth building was included for some six months in 1988-89.

[2] Costs are exclusive of VAT. The buildings are occupied by staff from DOE and DOT.

Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for what period members of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee are appointed; and in what circumstances a member of the committee can be dismissed before the expiry of that period.

Mr. Atkins: Members are usually appointed for a three-year term which can be terminated at the discretion of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment, for Wales and for Scotland.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the statutory impediments to the abolition of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee.

Mr. Atkins: There are no statutory impediments.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a copy of those rules of conduct, of the kind referred to in paragraph 11.16 of the Cabinet Office's 1992 publication "Non-Departmental Public Bodies: a Guide for Departments", which apply to members of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee.

Mr. Atkins: The rules of conduct referred to in paragraph 11.16 of the Cabinet Office's publication, "Non-Departmental Public Bodies: a Guide for Departments", apply to the staff of NDPBs. The terms and conditions of appointment of Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee members are based on the guidance given in the Cabinet Office's "Guide on Public Appointments Procedures", copies of which are already available in the Library of the House.

River Thames

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the scope of his review of the strategic planning guidance on the River Thames.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced on 29 March that new strategic planning guidance would be prepared for the Thames. As a first step, a comprehensive study of the river will be undertaken. This will cover the river's history, environment, land use in the vicinity, potential and opportunities for development. The study will focus on the stretch of river from Hampton court to the Royal Naval college at Greenwich.

Local Authority Rent Arrears

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the level of rent arrears in each local authority *(a)* as an absolute amount and *(b)* as a percentage of the annual rent collectable, broken down by current and future tenant arrears, for the last three years available; and what was the political control of the authority at the time.

Sir Georg Young *[holding answer 20 April 1994]:* I have today placed in the Library tables showing the information requested on rent arrears of current and former tenants at the end of the financial years 1990-91 to 1992-93 for each local authority in England.

Council Tax (Transitional Relief)

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table setting out for each local authority in England which has submitted a claim for transitional relief for 1994-95 and on which his Department had received information by 15 April 1994 *(a)* the estimated amount of transitional relief each such authority has claimed, *(b)* the percentage of the total sum of transitional relief for England which each individual claim represents and *(c)* the estimated amount of transitional relief per dwelling in each authority which has submitted a claim.

Mr. Curry: I have today placed in the Library of the House a list of all claims for transitional relief for 1994-95 received by the Department, showing the percentage against 1994-95 total provision for England which each claim represents and the amount of transitional relief per chargeable dwelling for each local authority.

Water Quality

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether water purification processes are able to remove drug residues from water supplies;

(2) what evidence he has of the presence of residues from *(a)* the contraceptive pill and *(b)* Diazepam tranquillisers in water supplies; and what assessment he has made of the dangers associated with such contamination;

(3) what residues from drugs are most commonly detected in British water supplies; and what are the dangers associated with such contamination.

Mr. Atkins: The Department has commissioned surveys of concentrations of drugs residues in rivers and in river-derived water supplies. Survey data have also been provided to the Department by water companies and research organisations.

Drugs residues, including components of the birth control pill, pain killers and tranquillisers have been detected only infrequently and at very low concentrations in a few rivers. The concentrations of all residues were found to be several orders of magnitude lower than levels that might be expected to cause adverse effects. These already insignificant concentrations are further reduced during water treatment. Diazepam and other drugs residues have not been detected in water supplies.

National Rivers Authority Expenditure (North Yorkshire)

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much was spent in north Yorkshire by the National Rivers Authority in 1993-94; and what is its budget for North Yorkshire in 1994-95.

Mr. Atkins: I am informed by the National Rivers Authority that in its Northumbrian and Yorkshire region, which covers North Yorkshire, it spent an estimated £53·9 million in 1993-94 and that it expects to spend around £52 million in 1994-95. Figures below regional level are not available.

Road Traffic Growth

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies he has carried out to determine what level of road traffic growth is compatible with the commitments made by the United Kingdom Government under the 1992 framework convention on climate change, the 1992 convention on biological diversity and the Rio declaration on environment and development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 21 April 1994]:* Under the framework convention on climate change, the United Kingdom is committed to take measures aimed at returning the emission of greenhouse gases to 1990 levels by the year 2000. The United Kingdom climate change programme includes a commitment to real increases in road fuel duties of at least 5 per cent. in future Budgets. This is expected to contribute 2·5 millions of tonnes of carbon to the overall target of reducing emissions by 10 millions of tonnes of carbon by 2000. The calculation is based on an econometric model developed by the Department of Transport in consultation with DOE.

As the recently published "Sustainable Development Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan" make clear, the Government will take full account of sustainable development and biodiversity implications when formulating and reviewing its transport policies.

Urban Regeneration

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 31 March, *Official Report*, columns *919-20*, if he will update the information on urban regeneration spending given in his answer of 18 March 1993, *Official Report*, columns *365-67*, so as to correspond with the single regeneration budget information sought in the later question.

Mr. Baldry: The table updates the one provided in the answer on 18 March 1993 and includes figures for the additional programmes which have now been brought together in the single regeneration budget. In the case of some of the programmes transferring from other Government Departments only part of the programme has been brought into the single budget. The figures for expenditure in previous years on those programmes relate to the element of the programme which has become part of the single budget, as far as those can be separately identified.

The following programmes, now absorbed within the single regeneration budget, have previously operated only within urban priority areas: urban development corporations, urban programme, city challenge, task forces, city action teams, GEST 19 and safer cities. In future, resources for new projects funded from the single regeneration budget will be available throughout England.

In addition, economic, social and physical regeneration is supported through main programme expenditure by several Government Departments.

Expenditure on programmes within the SRB

£ million

	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
UDCs																
Cash terms	36	62	95	88	86	89	160	255	477	607	602	515	372	286	[1]253	[1]245
Current prices	71	114	167	148	137	137	234	347	609	718	667	552	387	286		
HATs																
Cash terms	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	27	78	88	[1]90	[1]90
Current prices	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	11	29	81	88		
URA																
Cash terms	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	22	181		
Current prices	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	23	181		
City Grant[2]																
Cash terms	—	—	8	15	24	24	28	28	39	45	41	44	24	—	[1]211	[1]221
Current prices	—	—	14	25	38	37	41	38	50	53	45	47	25	—		
DLG																
Cash terms	30	61	67	68	73	78	77	68	54	62	77	98	105	—		
Current prices	59	112	118	114	116	120	112	93	69	73	85	105	109	—		
Urban Programme[3]																
Cash terms	94	160	156	278	254	237	246	224	223	226	238	236	170	83		
Current prices	186	295	275	466	404	365	359	305	285	267	264	253	177	83		
Task Forces																
Cash terms	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	23	20	21	21	24	18	16		
Current prices	—	—	—	—	—	—	7	31	26	25	23	26	19	16		
CATs																
Cash terms	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	8	8	5	3	1		
Current prices	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	9	9	5	3	1		
City Challenge																768
Cash terms	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	52	206	214		
Current prices	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	56	214	214		
Estate Action																
Cash terms	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	175	265	348	358	373		
Current prices	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	207	294	373	372	373		
Rest of SRB[4]																
Cash terms	50	60	67	63	69	73	76	70	94	108	226	215	258	201		
Current prices	98	111	118	106	110	113	111	95	120	128	251	230	269	201		

[1] Current plans.
[2] Includes UDG and URG.
[3] Includes Urban Crime Fund payments in 1992-93.
[4] Up to 1994-95, Rest of SRB is made up from: Regional Enterprise Grant, Safer Cities, section 11, Ethnic Minority Grant, Ethnic Minority Business Initiatives, Programme Development Fund (PDF), TEC Challenge, Business Start-up Scheme, Local Initiative Fund, Compacts, Education Business Partnerships, Teacher Placement Service and GEST 19. From 1995-96 Rest of SRB also includes Urban Programme, Task Forces, City Action Teams (CATs), City Challenge, and Estate Action.

PDF—Figures are for Great Britain, except for 1994-95 when they are for England only.
s11 (urban)—Figures include payments for non-UPA ILEA authorities prior to 1991-92.
City Challenge—Also supported by £19 million per year from the Housing Corporation.
Estate Action—Due to change in Housing Capital Finance system, outturn figures not available prior to 1990-91.
Urban Regeneration Agency (URA)—From 1994-95 subsumed City Grant and Derelict Land Grant.

Captive Birds

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many British breeding birds and diurnal birds of prey, including non-indigenous species, are held in captivity in the United Kingdom and registered in accordance with regulations under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 22 April 1994]:* Some 16,892 birds are currently registered with the Department.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he has received on the conservation implications of his Department's recent proposals for amending the scheme controlling the keeping of wild birds in captivity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 22 April 1994]:* Further to my announcement of 21 February, more than 7,000 individuals and organisations have been consulted about our proposals to modify the bird ringing and registration system. A number of responses were received. These have been carefully considered and an announcement is being made today.

The Government's scientific advisors, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, English Nature, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Countryside Council for Wales have been fully consulted about my right hon. Friend's proposals to make changes to the bird ringing and registration system.

Endangered Species

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals are pending to amend the regulations under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of flora and fauna; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 22 April 1994]:* The European Commission issued an amended proposal for a

regulation on the possession of and trade in wild fauna and flora earlier this year. We are currently considering the details of the new text. Two explanatory memoranda on the proposals were recently deposited in the Library of the House.

Severn Estuary

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his current estimate of the dates for completion of consultation work for the Lower Severn estuary special protection area, registering the same area with the environment directorate of the European Union, producing a conservation plan for the wetlands habitat of bird species covered by the 1979 wild birds directive within the same special protection area, and producing a national conservation strategy for the redshank and dunlin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 22 April 1994]:* Since the hon. Member's previous question on the lower Severn estuary of 26 October, *Official Report,* columns *533-34,* my Department has received English Nature's proposals for the designation of this site as a special protection area. The period of consultation with private land owners and others by English Nature and the Countryside Commission for Wales ended on 18 April. The Lower Severn estuary is planned for designation as a special protection area in 1994.

English Nature and the Countryside Council for Wales are in the initial stages of preparing a management plan for the conservation of wildlife interests on the Severn. The Government's plans for the conservation of estuarial habitat and migratory wildfowl and waders, including dunlin and redshank, are informed by the extensive monitoring programmes compiled through the birds in estuaries inquiry, which uses a large number of professionally co-ordinated volunteers and is supported by the Government's nature conservation agencies. These programmes were recently re-launched, with Government endorsement, as the wetland bird survey.

Valuation and Community Charge Tribunal

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average delay in appeals from Bradford being heard by the valuation and community charge tribunal; what is the total number of appeals from Bradford appellants outstanding, to date; when those appeals are expected to be cleared; what action he is taking to complete all outstanding appeals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: A meaningful figure cannot yet be given on the average length of time taken to hear appeals, since a great many cases are being settled by agreement between the taxpayer and the Valuation Office agency and only a small proportion have been heard and determined by valuation tribunals.

At the end of March 1994, 3,334 proposals to alter the valuation list received in the area of Bradford city council were still outstanding.

As we announced on 11 January, we expect four out of five appeals to be dealt with before the end of the year and the remainder to be settled as rapidly as possible thereafter.

Leaseholders

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many long leaseholders in flats have to date exercised their right to collective enfranchisement contained in part I of the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993 *(a)* up to the stage of serving a notice of their claim to exercise the right and *(b)* to the completion of the acquisition.

Sir George Young: As collective enfranchisement under the provisions of this Act is a private transaction, leaseholders are not obliged to inform the Department when they serve a notice on their landlord or when they complete the transaction. Therefore, this information is not available.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many inquiries from leaseholders have been received by the advisory service set up in consequence of the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993.

Sir George Young: I understand from the chief executive of the leasehold enfranchisement advisory service, which operates independently from the Department that since it began work in February this year, 1,326 inquiries have been received and recorded.

Birds of Prey

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in respect of his proposal to lift protection from birds of prey; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I announced on 21 February 1994 that, following our review, we proposed to make changes to the bird registration system to reduce unnecessary regulation and to ensure that the controls are targeted and implemented more effectively. We consulted around 7,000 organisations and individuals about our proposal and a copy of our consultation letter was placed in the Library. Some 192 responses were received.

The Government remain convinced that the bird registration system is in need of change. It was introduced for conservation reasons and mainly in response to concerns about the major decline in populations of birds of prey in the wild. Since the introduction of the registration system of 1982, populations of some species have recovered, particularly sparrowhawks, kestrels and common buzzards.

Some concern was expressed by consultees that the removal of ringing and registration requirements could lead to an increase in the taking of birds of prey from the wild. However, we believe that the strict controls which will continue to protect birds of prey in the wild should avoid any threat to the conservation of the three United Kingdom breeding species to be removed from registration requirements: the sparrowhawk, kestrel and common buzzard. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 generally prohibits the injuring, killing or taking of birds from the wild. It also generally makes it an offence to possess any bird or egg, whether alive or dead, or any part or derivative of such a specimen.

The Act will continue to be strictly enforced. Moreover, the resources which will be released by deregistration will enable the Department's wildlife inspectorate to give

greater assistance to the police and other enforcement agencies in protecting all wild birds, particularly those more endangered species such as the hobby, red kite and golden eagle. Reorganising work in this way will also provide resources to expand the use of DNA testing techniques to verify captive breeding claims.

Concern was also expressed by the RSPCA and others that freedom of movement of specimens within the European Union would create opportunities for illegal trade in non-native birds, including globally threatened species. We have therefore decided that ringing and registration controls should continue to apply within Great Britain to birds of prey which are threatened with extinction on a global basis, in order to assist international conservation efforts. In particular this means that the following species originally proposed for deregistration will be retained on schedule 4 to the Act.

Species	
Black Honey-Buzzard	*Henicopernis infuscatus*
Madagascar Fish Eagle	*Haliaeetus vociferoides*
Pallas's Fish Eagle	*Haliaeetus leucoryphus*
Steller's Sea Eagle	*Haliaeetus pelagicus*
Mountain Serpent-Eagle	*Spilornis kinabaluensis*
Adaman Serpent-Eagle	*Spilornis elgini*
Madagascar Serpent-Eagle	*Eutriorchis astur*
Small Sparrowhawk	*Accipiter nanus*
New Britain Sparrowhawk	*Accipiter brachyurus*
Imitator Sparrowhawk	*Accipiter imitator*
Gundlach's Sparrowhawk	*Accipiter gundlachi*
White-necked Hawk	*Leucopternis lacernulata*
Grey-backed Hawk	*Leucopternis occidentalis*
Ridgeway's Hawk	*Buteo ridgwayi*
Galapagos Hawk	*Buteo galapagoensis*
Hawaiian Hawk	*Buteo solitarius*
New Guinea Eagle	*Harpyopsis novaeguinae*
Great Philippine Eagle	*Pithecophaga jefferyi*
Adalbert's Eagle	*Aquila adalberti*
Imperial Eagle	*Aquila heliaca*
Wallace's Hawk-Eagle	*Spizaetus nanus*
Plumbeous Forest-Falcon	*Micrastur plumbeus*
Lesser Kestrel	*Falco naumanni*
Mauritius Kestrel	*Falco punctatus*

The Government proposal to invite the Joint Nature Conservation Committee to advise on criteria for the listing of species on schedule 4 and our proposal that the list of species should be subject to regular review, will enable us to respond to changes in population levels of particular species and introduce or reinstate registration requirements in the future. If necessary, this can be done swiftly to meet any conservation need. I have today made an order under section 22 of the Act. This will remove the following species from schedule 4 to the Act: sparrowhawk, kestrel, common buzzard, non-native and irregular visitor species of birds of prey—except the Barbary falcon and the globally threatened species listed above—and certain other birds which are not commonly kept in captivity.

TRANSPORT

Public Bodies

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to secure greater transparency in the affairs of non-elected bodies whose membership in whole or in part is appointed by him or who exercise functions previously carried out by local authorities.

Mr. Norris: The Government's policy of extending access to official information applies not only to Government Departments but to public bodies which come under the jurisdiction of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, the ombudsman. Details are set out in the "Code of Practice on Access to Government Information", copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Local Government Legislation

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the Acts of Parliament and Consolidation Acts that affect local government that have been introduced by his Department since 1990.

Mr. Norris: The following Acts of Parliament which affect local government have been introduced by the Department of Transport since 1990.

	Acts
New Roads and Street Works Act 1991	(c22)
Road Traffic (Temporary Restrictions) Act 1991	(c26)
Road Traffic Act 1991	(c40)
Severn Bridges Act 1992	(c3)
Traffic Calming Act 1992	(c30)
Transport and Works Act 1992	(c42)
Railways Act 1993	(c43)

Detective Agencies

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much his Department has spent on contracts with private detective agencies since 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The Department of Transport has spent approximately £760,000 on contracts with private detective agencies since April 1991.

Such agencies have been used for the following purposes:

(a) to hand serve summonses in connection with prosecutions for failure to pay vehicle excise duty;
(b) to collect evidence and hand serve papers on people who have trespassed on the Department's land;
(c) to establish the whereabouts of people believed to have caused damage to the Department's roads and structures for the purpose of making claims against them;
(d) to trace former employees who were inadvertently overpaid before they left the Department's employ;
(e) in litigation action;
(f) in one case to investigate a member of staff following complaints received from members of the public.

Environmental Protection

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals in regard to environmental protection he plans to put to the European Transport Council on 18 April.

Mr. MacGregor: The United Kingdom made no specific proposals on environmental protection at the

European Transport Council on 18 April. I refer the hon. Member to my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) of 20 April, *Official Report*, column *524*, which reported the items discussed and result of the Council.

Transport Research Laboratory

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what contingency plans he has in the event of there being no purchasers for the Transport Research Laboratory.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend sees no need for contingency plans. The Government would not have decided to transfer the Transport Research Laboratory to the private sector if we did not believe that that could be achieved.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will guarantee future work from his Department for the Transport Research Laboratory during and after its privatisation.

Mr. Key: In 1994-95 not less than 40 per cent. by value of new surface transport research work commissioned by the Department of Transport will be guaranteed to the Transport Research Laboratory. The question of guaranteeing work for the Transport Research Laboratory after privatisation is a matter for consideration with our financial advisers and prospective bidders as part of the sale process.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will ensure that the service conditions of the Transport Research Laboratory staff are not adversely affected in the long term following privatisation.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend has undertaken to sell the Transport Research Laboratory only to reputable purchasers, who can demonstrate an ability to meet obligations to staff transferring to the new organisation.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of the statement he made regarding future privatisation plans of the Transport Research Laboratory at the time of the setting up of the Transport Research Laboratory agency.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend made no statement about future privatisation plans for the Transport Research Laboratory at the time of launching it as an executive agency.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what procedure he proposes to introduce in respect of the transfer of intellectual property rights from the Transport Research Laboratory to the potential purchaser; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what measures he proposes to ensure that collaborative research at the Transport Research Laboratory is not damaged by privatisation;

(3) if he will take steps to guarantee the future availability of the *(a)* research track, *(b)* pavement test, *(c)* driving simulator, *(d)* library and *(e)* crash test facilities currently at the Transport Research Laboratory, Crowthorne.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend will be considering those matters with his financial and other advisers as part of the process of transferring the Transport Research Laboratory to the private sector.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the implications of fragmentation of the Transport Research Laboratory research undertakings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend has considered carefully the advice of the consultants KPMG Peat Marwick on the options for privatisation of the Transport Research Laboratory, including fragmentation. The Government have not yet decided on the form of sale but the current aim is to seek bids for the whole of the laboratory rather than its constituent components.

Research Projects

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research projects have been undertaken in the last 10 years; in each case, whether this research was published, if applicable; in what form it was made available to the general public; and what proportion of his Department's commissioned research projects in each year have resulted in publication.

Mr. Key: The Department commissions many research projects each year addressing issues ranging from urban congestion, parking control, public transport operations, bridge and highway engineering to aviation and shipping safety. At any particular time, some 400 to 500 projects are in progress. In general, the Department's policy is that the results of this research commissioned should be published or otherwise disseminated to those expected to benefit from the knowledge.

Publication can be in the form of research reports, contractor reports, guides, papers and articles. The Transport Research Laboratory, which has been responsible for carrying out and managing much of the Department's research, has published approximately 800 such reports since 1985. Without disproportionate effort, it is not possible to establish in what form each research result was made available and what proportion this represents of the total research commissioned. Moreover, reports often do not represent the final outcome of the Department's research effort. In many cases, findings are promulgated through changes to technical standards, legislation, operational procedures and policy.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what assessment he has made of the value of the combined research operations functioning on the purpose adapted site at Crowthorne;

(2) what assessment he has made of the financial value of collaborative research to the Transport Research Laboratory.

Mr. Key: Assessments of the value of the research operations at Crowthorne and of the collaborative research undertaken by the Transport Research Laboratory are commercially confidential information, the disclosure of which would be prejudicial to the sale process.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he will take to ensure continued impartiality following privatisation of the Transport Research Laboratory.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend will be considering the measures required to ensure the continued impartiality of the Transport Research Laboratory with his financial and other advisers as part of the process of transferring the laboratory to the private sector.

A66

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many agricultural vehicles use the A66 each day between Scotch Corner and Penrith.

Mr. Key: No separate data are available on the flows of agricultural vehicles on the A66. Agricultural vehicles are classified as goods vehicles in the national traffic census.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many vehicles use the A66 per day from east to west and west to east between Scotch Corner and Penrith.

Mr. Key: The latest available estimates are for 1992. Approximately 8,900 vehicles use this route on average, each day. Of these about 53 per cent.—4,700—are westbound and 47 per cent.—4,200—eastbound.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many heavy goods vehicles use the A66 each day between Scotch Corner and Penrith.

Mr. Key: The latest available estimates are for 1992. Approximately 2,200 heavy goods vehicles use this route on average, each day—those figures include agricultural vehicles.

Privatisation

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what response he has given to the recommendations of the Transport Select Committee's second report of Session 1993-94, HC 137, on privatisation and deregulation of Department of Transport agency work.

Mr. Key: The Government's response to the report of the Select Committee on Transport, on the privatisation and deregulation of Department of Transport executive agency work, was sent to the Committee on 30 March 1994. I understand that the Committee is to publish the response shortly.

Belgrave Road

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if Belgrave road, London SW1, will be removed from the priority—red—route network once Vauxhall Bridge road, London SW1, has been improved.

Mr. Norris: Provided that Vauxhall Bridge road is improved so that it is able to accommodate all inner ring road traffic, yes.

Westlink London Bus Subsidiary

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the valuation formula for the sale of Westlink London Bus subsidiary.

Mr. Norris: A confidential benchmark valuation was carried out by London Transport before the sale. Potential purchasers made their own assessments of the value of the company in formulating their bids. In the light of the benchmark valuation, the Government were and remain content with the proceeds from the sale.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the sale conditions of the Westlink London Bus subsidiary included clawback clauses in the event of its resale within 12 months of its privatisation.

Mr. Norris: No. The sale took place on the open market and was widely advertised. This ensured that good value for money was obtained from the privatisation.

Railway Property (Trespass)

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the statutory provision, with regard to trespass on railway land and property, and related offences, consequent upon the passing of the Railways Act 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The offence of trespass on railway land and property, and related offences, are covered by sections 54 and 57 of the British Transport Commission Act 1949. These sections apply to Railtrack by virtue of paragraph 9 of schedule 8 to the Railways Act 1993.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he received from the British Transport Police Federation in September 1993 on the effect of the Railways Act 1993 on offences relating to trespassing on railway property.

Mr. Freeman: None. The federation's chairman wrote to me on 2 September raising a number of issues which were subsequently discussed at a meeting on 8 September, but we did not touch upon the specific question of trespass.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if British Rail will prosecute a trespass on railway lines by the Garth and South Berkshire hunt on Saturday 12 March.

Mr. Freeman: At 12.58 on Saturday 12 March, a British Rail train driver reported hounds on the line at Mortimer, south of Reading. The driver of the next train through at 13.02 reported a clear track. I understand that no further action is proposed.

A13

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the expected date of the construction and completion of the Wellington to Mandyke section of the new A13 road.

Mr. Key: As this question relates to operational matters of the Highways Agency, the chief executive will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Andrew Mackinlay, dated 25 April 1994:

You recently put down a Parliamentary Question asking the Secretary of State for Transport what is the expected date of the construction and completion of the Wennington to Mar Dyke section of the new A13 road. As the question relates to an operational matter for the Highways Agency, I have been asked to reply.

The A13 Wennington to Mar Dyke scheme has been announced as a new start for 1994-95. We expect to invite tenders shortly. The tender documents will set down a contract period not exceeding two years. Construction of the scheme will be co-ordinated with works for the Thames Avenue to Wennington section which started earlier this year.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

D-day Anniversary

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will place in the Library a copy of the contract between his Department and Lowe Bell Communications as consultants to the commemoration of the D-day anniversary.

Mr. Sproat: No.

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what private sector sponsorship is being arranged for any events associated with the commemoration of the D-day anniversary.

Mr. Sproat: Sponsorship for events to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the D-day landings has been generously given and more may be given.

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what provision for expenses and other remuneration to Lowe Bell Communications has been agreed in addition to its fee as consultants to the commemoration of the D-day anniversary.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 22 April 1994]:* In addition to its consultancy fees of £50,000, Lowe Bell Communications is paid administrative expenses at cost, up to a maximum of £12,500 over the period of the contract, where additional agreed expenses are incurred these are paid at cost. All these costs are net of VAT.

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will place in the Library all tender documents connected with the appointment of consultants to the commemoration of the D-day anniversary.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 22 April 1994]:* Yes.

Leisure Industry

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will set out the nature of the relationship between his Department and the leisure industry.

Mr. Sproat: My Department has a constructive and collaborative relationship with the leisure industry which it pursues in each of its areas of responsibility. Further details are set out in the Department's 1994 annual report.

WALES

Accident and Emergency Units

12. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he intends to introduce to improve the chances of survival of patients admitted with life-threatening conditions into accident and emergency units in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend and I want to build on the present good record and the Welsh Office is currently working with the health service to review the pattern of accident and emergency provision across Wales.

Sustainable Energy Policy

13. **Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for the preparation of a sustainable energy policy for Wales.

Mr. Redwood: The Government's policies in this area are set out in "Sustainable Development—The UK Strategy", published on 25 January 1994.

Dental Services

14. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many patients have been unable to obtain NHS treatment from a general dental practitioner in the period from December 1992 in *(a)* Clwyd and *(b)* Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Fortnightly returns submitted by family health service authorities suggest that between 4 December 1992 and 25 March 1994 authorities were unable immediately to secure NHS dental treatment for only eight patients in Wales, four of whom resided in Clwyd. It is likely that NHS treatment was secured in the period immediately following submission of the returns and it is significant that there are now over 51,000 more patient registrations in Wales than there were in December 1992.

Patients Charter

15. **Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on progress with the patients charter.

Mr. Redwood: The patients charter has played an important role in raising the standard of services provided in Wales and performance continues to improve. Provisional figures show that all the waiting times guarantees had been achieved by 4 April 1994.

Local Authority Boundaries

16. **Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he made of transport links between Llandridnod Wells and Llanelly Hill when considering the proposed new local authority boundaries.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None.

17. **Mr. Sweeney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to limit the spread of superstores in out-of-town locations.

Mr. Redwood: Government policy on retail development is set out in planning policies guidance note 6, "Town Centres and Retail Developments". This stresses the need for a suitable balance in providing for retail development between town centre and out-of-centre retail facilities. I have made clear my intention to encourage more investment in town centres and greater use of under-used land in and around those centres and will issue further guidance.

Housing

18. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning his policies for enabling local councils to repair and modernise aging housing stock.

Mr. Redwood: We have made substantial resources available for home renovation in Wales. It must be for local councils to determine their priorities for repair and improvement from the resources that they have available.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what cash he has given to each of the boroughs and districts in Clwyd for the purpose of renovating housing stock.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on the allocation of capital resources for the renovation of private and public housing stock in each district in Clwyd for 1993-94 and 1994-95 is given in the following table:

£ million

	1993-94	1994-95
Alyn and Deeside	4·311	4·779
Colwyn	4·623	5·568
Delyn	3·651	4·815
Glyndwr	2·538	2·925
Rhuddlan	5·315	5·281
Wrexham Maelor	9·933	10·758

Local Government Reform

19. **Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest estimate of the cost of the proposed local government reform in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The measures in the Local Government (Wales) Bill will result in transitional costs estimated on the basis of a report prepared by consultants to be between £65 million and £150 million over 15 years. Those will be offset from April 1996 by continuing savings in public expenditure. The precise level of those will depend on decisions to be taken by the new councils on such matters as staffing levels and management structures.

Drug Education

20. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to review drug education in schools.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: All schools have to provide a curriculum which promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development and all pupils have to be taught about the effects of drug abuse on health as part of the national curriculum. It is for schools themselves to decide how to organise and provide drugs education. School inspectors consider the effectiveness of health education as part of their duty to report on the provision of education in schools.

The Welsh Office has issued a guide on "Drug Misuse and the Young", which contains advice on drugs education. Under the grants for education support and training programme, we have made grants available to local education authorities for measures to promote personal and social education, including education on health and drugs.

Training

21. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what numbers of males and females aged over 18 years are at present in full-time training in Wales; and what were the numbers in each year since 1979.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Numbers in training are not collected by gender or age. The number of adults aged 18 and over in full-time training at 31 March 1989 and in subsequent years is as follows:

Year	Number
1989	13,561
1990	15,929
1991	10,252
1992	10,449
1993	10,754
1994	[1]9,587

[1] The figure for 1994 refers to the position for February. The figure at 31 March 1994 is not available.

Note:

Comparable figures for years prior to 1989 are not available.

Farm Workers

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will show the average income of *(a)* farmers and *(b)* farm workers in (i) cash and (ii) real terms, using 1985 as a constant, in each year since 1980 showing these incomes as a percentage of the average wage.

Mr. Redwood: Two of the main indicators of the average income of farmers are the cash income per farm and the average net farm income. Both are derived from the farm business survey. Neither of those estimates is available on a consistent basis before 1986-87 nor strictly comparable with the average wage. Details from both of those income measures together with information on the average income of hired full time agricultural workers are shown in the tables.

Cash income of the farm business

Years	Estimated cash income (£000 per annum)	Real terms 1985 prices[1] (£000 per annum)
1987-88	18·2	17·01
1988-89	19·7	17·43
1989-90	19·6	16·07
1990-91	19·5	14·55
1991-92	23·3	16·52
1992-93	23·9	16·37

Net farm income of the farm business

Years	Estimated net farm income (£000 per annum)	Real terms 1985 prices[1] (£000 per annum)
1987-88	11·2	10·5
1988-89	15·8	14·0
1989-90	12·3	10·1
1990-91	10·5	7·8
1991-92	14·0	9·9
1992-93	16·9	12·0
1993-94 (forecast)	22·6	15·3

[1] Deflated by the Retail Price Index.

Hired full-time agricultural workers in Wales

Year	Cash terms (£ per week)	Real terms 1985 prices[1] (£ per week)	Percentage of average wage[2]
1981	87·62	110·77	73·4
1982	93·53	108·88	71·8
1983	101·50	113·03	72·5
1984	105·27	111·63	70·6
1985	117·43	117·43	73·3
1986	117·51	113·65	69·0
1987	128·73	119·53	70·2
1988	135·50	119·91	69·0
1989	141·07	115·82	65·3
1990	153·83	115·31	66·3
1991	173·79	123·08	68·9
1992	[3]204·18	[3]139·47	[3]75·4
1993	189·54	127·46	67·4

[1] Deflated by the Retail Prices Index.

[2] Average earnings of all industries and services in Wales. It covers those whose pay for the survey period at April each year was not affected by absence. Men aged 21 and over and women aged 18 and over on 1 January in the year of the survey for 1981-1983 and males and females on adult rates for 1984 onwards.

[3] Figures are inflated due to employees working, on average, 2 hours more overtime than in other years, resulting in an extra £10 to £12 income per week.

Asthma

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of asthma were reported in each Welsh health area for each year since 1979; and if he will set out the figures in the same manner as the Secretary of State for Health in her answer to the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) of 30 March, *Official Report*, columns *887-90*.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is given in the following table:

Hospital episodes [1] with a main diagnosis of asthma (ICD9 493)
In-patients and day cases by District Health Authority of treatment

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991-92[2]*	*1992-93[2]*
Clwyd	387	366	415	385	430	494	653	584	643	694	703	664	759	695
East Dyfed	212	232	232	277	300	291	324	352	368	391	313	356	367	424
Pembrokeshire	116	119	121	110	134	186	199	198	192	218	218	246	233	235
Gwent	474	460	629	483	610	678	696	910	827	901	793	697	912	1,032
Gwynedd	243	255	213	246	264	269	315	409	456	438	360	396	413	292
Mid Glamorgan	575	601	688	621	719	845	1,072	1,106	1,113	1,148	1,006	1,068	[3]—	[3]—
Powys	100	118	114	82	114	92	92	91	89	91	137	109	176	178
South Glamorgan	585	641	819	768	825	894	928	1,019	1,112	1,303	1,116	1,185	1,213	1,038
West Glamorgan	392	487	540	596	654	753	614	679	787	907	902	563	[3]—	[3]—
Total	3,084	3,279	3,771	3,568	4,050	4,502	4,893	5,348	5,587	6,091	5,548	5,284	[3]—	[3]—

[1] Figures may understate the true position in that not all hospitals provide complete clinical information. Data relate to discharges and deaths for 1979 to 1990 and to finished consultant episodes for 1991-92 and 1992-93.
Figures are presented according to the District Health Authority area (as at present) in which hospital treatment took place. 1992-93 information includes NHS Trusts.

[2] Provisional.

[3] Denotes not available.

Sources: Hospital Activity Analysis 1979 to 1990.
Patient Episode Database for Wales 1991-92 onwards.

Welsh Economic Council

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which members of the new Welsh economics policy committee have qualifications or experience in ecological sustainability or have published in the field; and if he will give details.

Mr. Redwood: The Welsh Economic Council was set up to provide a discussion forum with individuals drawn from a wide spectrum of business and economic interests across Wales. Its core membership will be supplemented by additional individuals, who will be invited to meetings where their particular qualifications or experience could contribute to the discussions.

NHS Salary Costs

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what have been the total salary costs for *(a)* managerial staff, *(b)* clerical and administrative staff and *(c)* nursing and midwifery staff since 1989 in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I refer the hon. Member to the replies given to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 25 November 1993, *Official Report*, column *151*, and 17 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *1081*.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish details of those persons and institutions to whom Forestry Commission land has been sold in Wales during the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Lists giving details of the areas of forest land sold by the Forestry Commission from the start of the disposals programme in July 1981 to December 1993 are held in the Library of the House. The lists provide the name of the purchaser where the purchaser has agreed that this can be made public.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 12 April, *Official Report*, columns *67-68*, for which of those Forestry Commission sites sold, applications for clear felling have been granted; and for which of the Forestry Commission sites sold applications have been made for further planting schemes.

Mr. Redwood: Applications for clear felling have been approved for the areas given as follows and applications have been approved for replanting all these areas.

County and name of property	*Area (hectares)*	*Area approved for felling (hectares)*
Clwyd		
Bryndethol	7·0	4·4
Maes Mynach	10·0	9·6
Worlds End	84·0	9·7
Dyfed		
Allt Cae Ffynon Wen	3·0	2·5
Allt Cilfrychen and Goredig	27·0	10·7
Allt Cwm Tywyll	5·5	5·5
Allt Penlan Fach	4·0	0·6
Allt Pwll Priddog	19·0	1·3
Cae Sarah	4·0	4·0
Careg Fadog Wood	6·0	5·9
Coed Newydd, Gwastad	48·6	14·0
Cresselly Big Wood	48·0	3·6
Cwm Bran Wood	8·0	8·0
Factory Wood	3·0	3·0

County and name of property	Area (hectares)	Area approved for felling (hectares)
Gelli Cefn y Rhos	7·0	5·5
Hafod Iwan	32·0	18·0
Quarry Wood	7·0	6·4
Tan y Lan	32·5	15·5
Tan yr Allt	7·0	1·5
Powys		
Craig yr Henfforddd	7·5	6·8
Stocking Wood	8·0	2·5

Bed Availability

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the average number of *(a)* beds available and *(b)* new accident and emergency cases during 1993-94, by regional health authority; and what were the figures per 1,000 population.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information given in the following table relates to 1992-93, the latest financial year for which figures are available.

Health Authority area[1]	Average daily available beds for all specialties		New accident and emergency out-patients	
	Number	Rate[2]	Number	Rate[2]
Clwyd	2,252	5·4	102,931	248·3
East Dyfed	1,491	6·3	60,014	252·9
Gwent	2,778	6·2	110,714	246·4
Gwynedd	1,434	6·0	45,268	188·8
Mid Glamorgan	3,646	6·7	155,898	287·2
Pembrokeshire	437	3·8	25,760	226·3
Powys	854	7·2	25,501	213·9
South Glamorgan	2,933	7·1	84,446	205·7
West Glamorgan	2,244	6·0	105,546	284·3

[1]Figures are given according to the district health authority area in which hospitals are situated. NHS Trusts are included.
[2]Rate per 1,000 population using 1992 mid-year estimated population.

Statementing of Children

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by local education authority for 1984 and the latest date for which information is available *(a)* the number of educational psychologists employed, *(b)* the ratio of educational psychologists to school age children, *(c)* the number of children with statements and *(d)* the ratio of children with statements to the school age population.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information required is given in the following table. Data on educational psychologists were not collected prior to January 1992.

	Number of educational psychologists 1993	Rate per 10,000 of the school population 1993
Clwyd	20	3
Dyfed	10	2
Gwent	21	3
Gwynedd	5	1
Mid Glamorgan	19	2
Powys	4	2
South Glamorgan	10	2
West Glamorgan	12	2
Wales	101	2

	Number of children with statements of special educational needs		Rate per 10,000 of the school population[1]	
	1984	1993	1984	1993
Clwyd	1,142	3,219	162	490
Dyfed	814	1,319	144	233
Gwent	1,658	2,297	215	314
Gwynedd	987	865	242	240
Mid Glamorgan	3,885	4,016	390	422
Powys	308	517	154	270
South Glamorgan	1,171	1,374	175	202
West Glamorgan	2,268	2,333	376	411
Wales	12,223	15,940	248	339

[1]The number of pupils per 10,000 of the full-time pupils in maintained nursery, primary, secondary, special and independent schools.

Ambulance Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentages of ambulances in each service in Wales responded to emergency calls within *(a)* eight minutes and *(b)* 14 to 20 minutes in 1993-94.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The ambulance service classification in Wales and its standards for emergency call response times are as follows:

	50 per cent. within minutes	95 per cent. within minutes
Urban areas (Population density: more than 3 persons per acre—South Glamorgan)	7	14
Rural areas (Population density: between 0·5 and 3 persons per acre—Clwyd, Gwent, Mid and West Glamorgan)	8	18
Sparsley populated areas (Population density: less than 0·5 persons per acre—East Dyfed, Gwynedd, Pembrokeshire and Powys)	8	21

Information for the year ending 31 March 1994 is not yet available. The latest available information, for the nine months ending 31 December 1993, is shown in the following table.

	Percentage of ambulances arriving within	
	50 per cent. standard response time	*95 per cent. standard response time*
Clwyd	61	97
East Dyfed	58	94
Gwent[1]	51	96
Gwynedd	56	95
Mid Glamorgan	55	97
Pembrokeshire	45	90
Powys[1]	44	88
South Glamorgan[1]	56	94
West Glamorgan	57	93

[1] Part of the area managed by the South and East Wales Ambulance NHS Trust.

NHS Staff Statistics

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were employed at the latest available date for each grade in the administrative and clerical pay group and the ancillary staffs pay groups of the national health service, for grades 0 to 12 in the senior managers pay group, for each grade in the ambulance staffs pay group and the ambulance officers pay group, and for general managers and chief executives in the national health service; and if he will express the figures as numbers and as full-time equivalents.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information available is given in the following table.

Staff in post as at 31 December 1993[1]

	Male		*Female*	
	Number	*Wte*[2]	*Number*	*Wte*[2]
Administrative and clerical[3]*:*				
Grade 1	7	5·0	50	26·8
Grade 2	337	315·9	3,484	2,469·4
Grade 3	250	247·8	2,660	2,310·1
Grade 4	228	223·1	1,354	1,270·4
Grade 5	271	266·4	495	478·3
Grade 6	238	235·1	237	224·0
Grade 7	108	105·3	63	58·1
Grade 8	28	28·0	7	7·0
Grade 9	7	7·0	—	—
Grade 10	7	7·0	—	—
Sandwich course student	2	1·4	—	—
Regional finance trainee	12	12·0	27	27·0
General management trainee	5	5·0	9	9·0
Not known[4]	32	30·6	184	165·2
Ancillary:				
Upholsterer	3	3·0	—	—
Scale A	63	44·8	282	150·0
Scale B	1,943	1,766·4	5,645	3,295·8
Scale C	256	241·4	515	370·3
Scale D	31	31·0	45	30·8
Scale E	10	10·0	13	9·6
Scale I	58	57·1	269	216·2
Scale II	85	84·9	123	116·0
Scale III	59	59·0	48	47·1
Scale IV	62	62·0	44	39·9
Not known[4]	10	10·0	176	122·6
Senior managers[5] [6]	128	127·5	48	47·4
Ambulance staff[7]*:*				
Trainee	33	33·0	7	7·0
Ambulanceman/women	164	114·8	52	34·2
Qualified	518	518·0	33	33·0
Leading	107	107·0	2	2·0
Ambulance officers[7]*:*				
Band I	25	25·0	3	3·0
Band II	44	44·0	3	3·0
Assistant senior	15	15·0	—	—
Senior	8	8·0	—	—
Principal	1	1·0	—	—
General Managers/Chief Executives[6]	35	35·0	6	6·0

[1] Includes staff employed by Health Authorities, NHS Trusts, the Welsh Health Common Services Authority and those Family Health Service Authorities using the health authorities payroll system.

Staff (other than medical and dental) paid on local payscales who cannot be assigned to a staff group centrally are excluded. These staff numbered in total around 532 whole-time equivalents at 31 December 1993.

[2] Whole-time equivalents.

[3] Excluding staff on managerial pay scales.

[4] Staff paid on local pay scales who can be assigned to a staff group centrally but for whom no details of grade are available.

[5] All staff paid on senior manager pay scales.

[6] Excluding staff paid on local pay scales for whom no details of grade are available, although they can be assigned centrally to the managerial staff group. These staff numbered around 13 whole-time equivalents at 31 December 1993.
[7] Excluding staff employed by the South and East Wales NHS Ambulance Trust, for whom no details are available yet centrally for 31 December 1993. These staff numbered around 509 whole-time equivalents at 31 December 1993.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many NHS trusts in Wales he expects to reach their target of six per cent. return on capital for the 1993-94 financial year.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Thirteen.

Prince of Wales Orthopaedic Hospital

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it a condition of continued funding for the Prince of Wales orthopaedic hospital, Rhydlafar near Cardiff treatment centre that the centre discontinues the use of the Zimmer CPT artificial hip joint pending resolution of that hip joint's failure rate.

Mr. Redwood: No. Zimmer is on the Department of Health's register of approved manufacturers.

Sewage Infrastructure

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of Welsh Water plc and the Director General of Water Services in relation to the sum allocated for sewerage infrastructure renewal and not spent for the purpose allocated in the period 1989 to 1993; and what proposals he has to amend the financial arrangements with the regulated water company and the regulator in relation to each undertaking.

Mr. Redwood: I have not discussed this matter with the chairman of Welsh Water plc or the Director General of Water Services. By 1995, Dwr Cymru will have spent nearly £1·1 billion on capital investment, well in excess of the amount allowed for in price limits set at privatisation.

Mr. Geoffrey Drake

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what information he had regarding, and what consideration he gave to, the departure of Geoffrey Drake from his employment at Penrhyn quarries before appointing him chairman of the Gwynedd acute hospitals trust;

(2) if he appointed executive selection consultants in relation to the appointment of the post of chairman of the Gwynedd acute hospitals trust; and what references were *(a)* sought and *(b)* received in relation to Mr. Geoffrey Drake the previous managing director of the Penrhyn quarries subsidiary of Sir Alfred McAlpine plc. by himself and any such executive selection consultants concerning the post;

(3) what consultations he had with the management of the Sir Alfred McAlpine Group prior to, and in relation to, the appointment of Mr. Geoffrey Drake as chairman of the Gwynedd acute hospitals trust.

Mr. Redwood: Executive search consultants were not involved in the appointment of Mr. Drake to chair the Gwynedd hospitals NHS trust. In selecting candidates for appointment, the Department makes such inquiries about individuals and undertakes such consultations as seem appropriate in each case. To disclose what those were in regard to Mr. Drake would be to breach the confidence of those involved.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received in relation to the suitability of Mr. Geoffrey Drake as chairman of the Gwynedd acute hospitals trust *(a)* before his appointment and *(b)* since his appointment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 4 March, *Official Report*, column *910*. Since that date I have received, and replied to, two further letters from the hon. Member about Mr. Drake's appointment.

Higher Education

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the numbers and percentages of students in higher education undertaking two-year diploma courses and three and four-year degree courses in each of the past 10 years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The number and percentage of students in higher education in Wales who undertook either a two-year diploma course or a three or four-year degree course in 1992-93 is shown in the following table. Information for years prior to 1992-93 are not readily available and I will write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Full time undergraduate students in Wales, 1992-93

	Number	*Percentage*
First degree		
Three years	24,634	52·8
Four years	11,506	24·6
Higher National Diploma		
Two years	4,085	8·7
Other courses at University of Wales		
Any length	3,304	7·1
Other courses at other institutions		
Any length	3,133	6·7
All full time undergraduates	46,662	100·0

Source: FESR & Universities' Statistical Record.

Press Relations

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to commence using electronic mail for the distribution of press releases.

Mr. Redwood: Some press notices are distributed to the media in London by the Central Office of Information's electronic service. I have no plans to extend this at present, but the matter is kept under review.

HEALTH

NHS Nurses

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish details of the numbers of qualified, unqualified and learner nursing staff who joined the NHS in each year since 1991.

Mr. Sackville: The information for 1993 is shown in the table. I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave him on 21 June 1993, *Official Report*, columns *28-29* for information on previous years.

1993	*Numbers*
Qualified	12,590
Unqualified	n/a
WTE (1993)	
Qualified	11,810
Unqualified	n/a
Pre-registration nursing	
Initial entries and re-entries	
Level 1	[1]1992-93
Traditional	3,886
P2000[2]	12,035

[1] Year ending 31 March 1993.
[2] Project 2000 learners are regarded as supernumerary and are not included in workforce numbers.
Totals taken from ENB Annual Report 1992-93 (Table 5-2).
Source: 1991 KM45 and KM46, 1992 onwards KM48.
n/a = not available.
All figures rounded to the nearest 10.
Figures for 1992 are based on returns from 12 regions. For 1993 numbers are based on returns from 11 regions and whole time equivalents on returns from 12.

Child Care

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she intends to take in relation to child care following the ruling of the High Court on 16 March in relation to child minders hitting children in their care; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: We have now studied the High Court judgment. It gives a clear ruling that the Department's guidance on the use of corporal punishment by child minders should be read in the context of the whole guidance document. Local authorities should not apply guidance so strictly that a person seeking registration as a child minder under part X of the Children Act 1989, who is in conflict with part of it, is automatically found to be unfit to be a child minder. The Department considers it unnecessary to introduce regulations. We are considering whether further clarification of the guidance is desirable.

Health Authority Budgets

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the underspending or overspending for each regional health authority on its 1992-93 budget, showing in each case the net contribution to such spending changes made by *(a)* negligence claims, *(b)* capital accounts and *(c)* general practitioner fundholders.

Mr. Sackville: The available information is shown in the table. Regional health authorities are not allowed to overspend their combined capital and revenue cash limits. In 1992-93, RHAs had general approval to carry forward up to 0·5 per cent. of their combined revenue and capital cash limits. The contribution of negligence claims and general practitioner fundholders to any underspending is not required for operational purposes, and is therefore not separately identifiable in the information available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairmen of regional health authorities for details.

Region	*Total over/ under(-)spend on cash limits[1] £000*	*Over/under(-) spend on capital cash limits £000*
Northern	–4,000	–6,838
Yorkshire	–4,000	–1,983
Trent	–2,465	–269
East Anglian	–3,000	–2,563
North West Thames	–5,629	–1,587
North East Thames	0	–5,094
South East Thames	0	–941
South West Thames	–2,000	1,334
Wessex	–3,042	8,183
Oxford	0	122
South Western	–7,018	–1,331
West Midlands	0	–6,114
Mersey	0	–477
North Western	0	–197

[1] This column represents the cash underdrawing against the combined capital and revenue cash limit.

North Yorkshire FHSA

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was spent by North Yorkshire family health services authority in 1993-94; and what is its budget for 1994-95.

Mr. Sackville: The 1993-94 outturn data are not yet available. Allocations for cash-limited general medical services expenditure and for the family health services authority's administration costs are determined by the regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of Northern and Yorkshire regional health authority, Mr. John Greetham, for details.

Abortion

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS abortions were performed on women who were under 13 weeks pregnant and resident *(a)* in each regional health authority and *(b)* in each district health authority in England and Wales in 1992; and how many of these operations involved admissions and discharge of the patient on the same day.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested will be placed in the Library. The number of national health service abortions includes abortions carried out in the private sector on NHS patients.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many abortions were performed in England and Wales on women who were resident in each health and social services board area in Northern Ireland in each year since 1990.

Mr. Sackville: The information is not available in the form requested.

Alcohol Concern

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what grants have been made over the last five years to Alcohol Concern.

Mr. Bowis: Alcohol Concern receives grant from several sources. The Department of Health awarded the following amounts from 1989-90 to 1993-94. The figures include sums available to Alcohol Concern disbursement to voluntary agencies for providing local services for alcohol misusers. These amounts are given in brackets.

Year	*Amount (£)*	*£*
1989-90	583,000	(200,000)
1990-91	603,000	(220,000)
1991-92	1,723,500	(1,310,000)
1992-93	2,693,000	(2,265,000)
1993-94	2,575,650	(2,130,000)

Redundancies

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what limits are placed on the total redundancy package for individuals in the health service;

(2) what are the limits placed on individual redundancy payments for staff in the health service.

Dr. Mawhinney: Redundancy payments for national health service staff employed on national terms and conditions of service, other than general managers and senior managers engaged on short-term rolling contracts, are governed by section 45 of the General Whitley Council handbook, copies of which are available in the Library. The limit on the maximum amount which can be paid is covered by paragraphs 2.4, 3, 4, 5 and 6 of section 45. Although general managers and senior managers engaged on short-term rolling contracts do not benefit from the provisions of section 45, they are still entitled to statutory redundancy payments.

Staff over the age of 50 with more than five years service who are made redundant are entitled to premature retirement benefits provided by section 46 of the General Whitley Council handbook.

NHS Management Executive

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 13 April, *Official Report*, column *203*, if she will list the dates and locations for the first meetings of the eight regional outposts of the NHS management executive which the public may attend.

Dr. Mawhinney: The regional offices of the national health service executive are part of the Department of Health, not separate public bodies, and will therefore not hold public meetings.

Northern and North Yorkshire Health Authority

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much *(a)* revenue and *(b)* capital was spent on behalf of North Yorkshire patients by Yorkshire regional health authority in 1993-94; and what is the equivalent estimated expenditure of the new combined Northern and Yorkshire regional health authority in 1994-95.

Mr. Sackville: Information on revenue spending on the residents of specific districts is not collected by the Department since it is not required for operational reasons. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the Northern and Yorkshire regional health authority, Mr. John Greetham, for details.

Capital is now largely spent by national health service trusts. The benefits of such expenditure are received by residents of any district health authority who are treated by particular trusts.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cash and standard price allocation for each health authority in the northern region in 1992-93 and 1994-95, and what was the effect of *(a)* regional bridging loans and *(b)* transitional allocations together with any underspending for 1992-93.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was spent by North Yorkshire health authority in 1993-94; and what is its budget for 1994-95.

Mr. Sackville: It is the responsibility of regional health authorities to allocate resources to their district health authorities. Information on the total allocations and cash limits made by regions to districts is not required for operational purposes and is therefore not collected by the Department. The hon. Members may wish to contact the chairman of the Northern and Yorkshire regional health authority, Mr. John Greetham, to request details of the 1994-95 budget. Information on 1993-94 expenditure by North Yorkshire health authority will become available from the annual accounts when these are received later in the year.

Salmonella

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many salmonella cases occurred *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in each NHS region (1) in absolute terms and (2) per head of population for (i) 1992 and (ii) 1993.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table. Figures for 1993 are provisional.

Reported cases of salmonellosis in England and Wales, 1992 and 1993

NHS region	*1992*		*1993*	
	[1]Number	*[2]Rate*	*[1]Number*	*[2]Rate*
Northern	1,569	50·6	1,629	52·6
Yorkshire	3,273	88·5	2,888	78·1
Trent	2,480	52·3	2,734	57·6
East Anglia	1,347	64·5	1,385	66·3
North West Thames	2,083	58·0	2,108	58·7
North East Thames	2,058	54·2	2,134	56·2
South East Thames	2,234	60·2	2,009	54·1
South West Thames	1,946	64·0	1,770	58·2
Wessex	1,871	62·5	1,893	63·2

NHS region	1992 [1]Number	1992 [2]Rate	1993 [1]Number	1993 [2]Rate
Oxford	1,582	61·3	1,665	64·5
South Western	2,266	68·3	2,260	68·2
West Midlands	2,879	54·6	2,673	50·7
Mersey	1,131	46·9	974	40·4
North Western	2,719	67·7	2,553	63·5
Wales	1,917	66·1	1,978	68·2
Total	31,355	61·2	30,653	59·8

[1] Figures are for laboratory confirmed cases of salmonella in humans reported to the Public Health Laboratory Service.
[2] Rates are expressed as laboratory confirmed cases per 100,000 population.

In-patient Statistics

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing *(a)* for each year since 1990 the number of beds available for the in-patient treatment of (i) the mentally ill and (ii) patients with learning difficulties and *(b)* the number of residential care places available in private, voluntary sector and local authority care of those with (1) mental illness and (2) learning difficulties in each year.

Mr. Bowis: The information is shown in the table.

NHS available beds

	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Mental illness	55,239	50,278	47,294
Learning disability	23,379	21,382	17,896

Staffed residential care places

	1990	1991	1992
Mental illness			
Local authority	5,730	5,740	5,560
Voluntary	3,080	3,510	4,300
Private	9,070	9,270	10,380
Learning disability			
Local authority	14,030	13,760	13,400
Voluntary	7,890	9,510	11,200
Private	8,380	9,380	10,040

General Practitioners

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practitioner fundholders underspent in 1991-92; what was the average underspend of those general practitioners; and what information she has on how that underspend has been used.

Dr. Mawhinney: In 1991-92, 243 general practitioner fundholders made savings on their budgets averaging about £60,000. Savings so far have been used to clear waiting lists and to purchase equipment and improve practice premises to develop services for patients.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to deduct general practitioner fundholding overspends in previous years from any underspends in subsequent years.

Dr. Mawhinney: None. General practitioner fundholders' budgets have to be managed in year. Regional health authorities manage any fundholder overspends from within their allocations in the same way as any other accountable expenditure. Fundholders' savings are reinvested in patient care.

Consultant Merit Awards

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what way she is planning to change the consultant merit award system.

Dr. Mawhinney: We are considering the report of the working party on the review of the consultants' distinction awards scheme.

Junior Doctors

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish information from the latest regional task force returns on the number of junior doctors working more than 83 hours per week by region.

Dr. Mawhinney: Task force returns for 30 September 1993, the latest date for which information is available, do not contain detailed data on hours of work which are monitored locally.

Smear Tests

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many laboratories report a smear test as cytology negative when no endocervical cells have been seen on the slide;

(2) what guidance has been issued on action to be taken when a cervical smear test is found to have no endocervical cells.

Mr. Sackville: The absence of columnar glandular endocervical cells does not in itself constitute an indication for a repeat smear if the smear is assessed in the laboratory as satisfactory according to recommended criteria. Where a patient's smear is shown by the laboratory to be unsatisfactory, she is invited to have a smear as soon as possible.

Financial Consultants

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the name of companies and organisations used as financial consultants in 1992-93 to her Department, the national health service management executive and any centrally run patient care services, not including trusts and health authority direct spending; and which financial consultants had a contract of more than £500,000.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave her on 21 March, *Official Report*, column 72. It is not possible to identify separately expenditure on management and financial consultancy.

Whipps Cross Hospital

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions the Minister for Health had about accident and emergency services during his visit to Whipps Cross hospital on 21 April; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I saw work under way on the £750,000 upgrading of the accident and emergency department. I learnt of plans to appoint three additional consultants and to make a number of service improvements. I am delighted that 98 per cent. of people attending the department are assessed by a nurse within four minutes of arrival.

Ophthalmology Services, Leeds

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many Leeds healthcare patients receiving ophthalmology treatment at the united Leeds teaching hospitals during 1993-94; and how many of those were treated in February and March.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for the district health authority, Leeds healthcare. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mrs. Pam Smith, chairman of the authority, for details.

Ambulance Services, Humberside

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the Humberside ambulance trust will next hold a public meeting; and on what date was its last public meeting.

Mr. Sackville: The National Health Service Trusts (Public Meetings) Regulations 1991 state that all national health service trusts are required to hold a public meeting on or before 30 September in every year, other than that which includes the first operational date of the trust. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mrs. Margaret Cracknell, the chairman of Humberside ambulance service national health service trust, for details of the 1994 public meeting.

Clinical Grading Appeals

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list, by region of origin, the number of outstanding clinical grading appeals at *(a)* district, *(b)* regional and *(c)* national level; and if she will estimate the cost to date.

Mr. Sackville: The number of appeals outstanding has dropped from just over 20,000 at 31 May 1993 to below 4,800 at 1 April 1994. We welcome this reduction. The Nursing and Midwifery Staffs Negotiating Council has agreed a new appeals mechanism for clearing all outstanding appeals by the end of 1995. All appeals outstanding at regional and national level will be heard by a new central adjudication panel. Information on the number of appeals outstanding is shown in the table. No estimate of the cost has been made.

Outstanding clinical grading appeals: Situation as at 1 April 1994

Region	*Employing authority level*	*To be heard by central adjudication panel*	*Total*
North West	189	815	1,004
North Thames	55	687	742
Trent	0	734	734
Northern and Yorkshire	31	674	705
West Midlands	134	425	559
South Thames	0	484	484
South West	0	351	351
Anglia and Oxford	0	204	204
Total	409	4,374	4,783

Ambulance Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentages of ambulances in each service in England responded within *(a)* eight minutes and *(b)* 14 to 20 minutes to emergency calls in 1993-94.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is not yet available.

Departmental Advice

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what advice her Department or the national health service management executive has provided to chairmen and chief executives of NHS trust hospitals on conducting health promotion campaigns and large-scale mail drops during the period of the local government and European elections; and if she will place that advice in the Library;

(2) what advice her Department or the national health service management executive has provided to chairmen and chief executives of NHS trust hospitals on whether to launch high-profile publicity campaigns during the period leading up to the local government and European Parliament elections;

(3) what advice her Department or the national health service management executive has provided to chairmen and chief executives of NHS trust hospitals on whether controversial proposals should be included on agendas of health authority meetings during the local government and European elections;

(4) what advice her Department or the national health service management executive has provided to chairmen and chief executives of NHS trust hospitals on the circulation of information and answers to questions during the period of the local government elections and European elections; and if she will place that advice in the Library;

(5) what advice her Department or the national health service management executive has provided to chairmen and chief executives of NHS trust hospitals on how to deal

with media inquiries during the period of local government elections and European elections; and if she will place that advice in the Library;

(6) if her Department or the national health service management executive will advise chairmen and chief executives of NHS trust hospitals that any lectures taking place in the period leading up to the local government and European elections should be confined to published facts and avoid speculation on future health policy;

(7) when her Department or the national health service management executive provided advice to chairmen and chief executives of NHS trust hospitals that, if they are uncertain about how to respond to requests from candidates, the media, or opposition spokespersons during the local government and European elections they should consult the NHS executive corporate affairs intelligence unit, head of news at the Department of Health or chief regional press officer;

(8) what advice her Department or the national health service management executive has provided to chairmen and chief executives of NHS trust hospitals on campaigning and canvassing on health authority property during the period of the local government elections and European elections; and if she will place that advice in the Library.

Dr. Mawhinney: The national health service executive issued EL(94)36, to remind NHS chief executives and general managers of the well-established principle that NHS staff should not be asked to engage in activities which could give rise to the criticism that people paid from public funds are being used for party political purposes and to give guidance on some specific issues. Similar guidance was issued before the last general election, in March 1992. Copies of EL(94)36 are available in the Library.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether it is her intention to require private companies operating contracts from NHS bodies to have established procedures covering freedom of speech;

(2) whether the guidance for staff on relations with the public and media is applicable to staff of private contractors operating under contracts with the NHS;

(3) whether the guidance for staff on relations with the public and media is applicable to staff employed under joint arrangements between health service bodies and local authorities or voluntary organisations.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave her on 25 February, *Official Report*, column *525*.

Health Service Staff

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which division within the NHS executive is responsible for monitoring the proportions of men and women in each grade in the NHS for compliance with the aims of Opportunity 2000.

Mr. Sackville: The national health service women's unit is responsible for monitoring performance on Opportunity 2000.

Public Bodies

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list all chairs and members of all health authorities, including family health service authorities, giving details of occupation and gender.

Dr. Mawhinney: The appointment of non-executive members to district health authorities and family health services authorities is a matter for the regional health authority. Information on chairmen and non-executive members of regional health authorities, and chairmen of DHAs and FHSAs and their occupations will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by name and position those chairs, members and non-executive directors of district health authorities, family health services authorities, NHS trusts, shadow NHS trusts and other NHS authorities who have dual appointments as chairs, members or non-executive directors of other district health authorities, FHSAs, NHS trusts, shadow NHS trusts and other NHS authorities.

Dr. Mawhinney: A list of those holding dual appointments is shown. This does not include information concerning non-executive members of district health authorities or family health services authorities, whose members are appointed by regional health authorities.

Dr. Christopher Robinson: Chairman of Northumberland FHSA, and non-executive member of Northern and Yorkshire RHA

Mrs. Rosemary Hawley: Chairman of Liverpool FHSA, and non-executive member of North West RHA

Mr. Manfred Dessau: Chairman of Nottinghamshire FHSA, and non-executive member of Trent RHA

Mrs. Elspeth Metcalfe: Chairman of Hereford and Worcester FHSA, and non-executive member of West Midlands RHA

Mr. Peter Gell: Chairman of Buckinghamshire FHSA, and non-executive member of Anglia and Oxford RHA

Mrs. Jill Stern: Chairman of Ealing Hammersmith and Hounslow FHSA, and non-executive member of North Thames RHA

Mrs. Anne Swain: Chairman of West Sussex FHSA, and non-executive member of South Thames RHA

Dr. Dale Ferguson-Hudson: Chairman of Isle of Wight FHSA, and non-executive member of South and West RHA

Mrs. Alison Cook: Chairman of Barnsley DHA, and non-executive member of the NHS Supplies Authority

Miss Catherine McLoughlin: Chairman of Bromley DHA and non-executive member of the NHS Supplies Authority

Mr. Frederick Hoult: Chairman of the Freeman Group of Hospitals NHS Trust, and non-executive member of the NHS Supplies Authority

Mrs. Phyllida Entwistle: Chairman of the Furness Hospitals NHS Trust, and member of the Mental Health Act Commission

Miss Georgina Linton: non-executive director of Guy's and Lewisham Mental Health NHS Trust, and member of the Mental Health Act Commission

Mrs. Lotte Mason: non-executive director of Ravensbourne Priority Health NHS Trust, and member of the Mental Health Act Commission

Professor Elaine Murphy: non-executive director of North West London Mental Health NHS Trust, and member of the Mental Health Act Commission

Each regional health authority is required to include among its non-executive members the chairman of a family health services authority. Appointees to other NHS bodies are permitted to be appointed as members of the NHS Supplies Authority and the Mental Health Act Commission.

Hospital Staff (Terms and Conditions of Service)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations her Department has had regarding paragraph 330 of the terms and conditions of service for hospital medical and dental staff.

Dr. Mawhinney: This provision has been the subject of discussions with the medical profession. There is no intention to amend this provision for those medical staff who remain on national terms and conditions of service.

Bridget O'Connell

Dr. Michael Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures are being taken to resolve the dispute between North East Thames regional health authority and paediatrician Bridget O'Connell; what has been *(a)* the cost and *(b)* the duration of the dispute to date; who is being held responsible for the cost; and what disciplinary measures are proposed.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is a matter for North Thames regional health authority. My hon. Friend may wish to contact Sir William Staveley, the chairman, for details.

Child Psychotherapists

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many child psychotherapists were working in the NHS in each region for the latest available year.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 23 March 1994]:* The latest figures available are shown in the table.

Child Psychotherapists employed in the National Health Service in England at 30 September 1992

England	*Whole term equivalent*
Northern	15
Yorkshire	15
Trent	5
East Anglian	*
North West Thames	50
North East Thames	65
South East Thames	25
South West Thames	25
Wessex	5
Oxford	5
South Western	10
West Midlands	5
Mersey	5
North Western	10
SHAs	10
TOTAL	255

Notes:
1. Figures are rounded to the nearest five.
2. * indicates greater than zero but less than 2·5.
3. The overall total does not equal the sum of components due to rounding.
4. *Source:* National Health Service Non-Medical Workforce Census.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Agency

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many parents with care were taken off income support following the award of maintenance payments by the Child Support Agency at the latest date for which figures are available; and what percentage that was of all the parents with care in receipt of income support in whose care an assessment has been finalised.

Mr. Burt: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the annual report of the Child Support Agency for 1993-94 will be published.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Donald Dewar, dated 22 April 1994:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the publication of the Child Support Agency's annual report.

The Agency aims to publish an annual report by the late summer of 1994. Copies will be placed in the Library of the House, and will also be available from the Agency's headquarters.

I hope that this reply is helpful.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the arrears of maintenance currently outstanding on Child Support Agency assessments; and what percentage this is of the total that should have been paid at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Donald Dewar, dated 22 April 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the arrears of maintenance currently outstanding on Child Support Agency assessments.

The Child Support Computer System is being upgraded to provide the information requested, but validated data is not currently available.

I am sorry not to be more helpful.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in how many cases an arrestment of wages has been carried out by the Child Support Agency at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Donald Dewar, 22 April 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the number of cases in which the Child Support Agency carried out an arrestment of wages.

To the end of March 1994, deductions from earnings orders had been carried out in an estimated 2,600 cases.

I hope that this reply is helpful.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average weekly sum set by the Child Support Agency as a maintenance payment at the latest date for which figures are available *(a)* including and *(b)* excluding cases where the absent parent is on benefit and contributing only £2·20 per week.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Donald Dewar, dated 22 April 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the average weekly sum of child maintenance.

I am afraid that information is not available in the form requested. Overall, however, we estimate that average weekly maintenance assessments by the Agency are approximately £45-£50 a week.

I hope that this reply is helpful.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people who have reached agreements for payments with the Child Support Agency are *(a)* registered unemployed and *(b)* in employment.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Stephen Byers, dated 22 April 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the number of clients of the Child Support Agency who are unemployed or in work.

I am afraid that information is not available in the form that you have requested. However, information is available on the number of maintenance assessments completed where the absent parent was in receipt of income support. At 28 February 1994, there had been 36,000 such assessments.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Mr. Ashby: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what money has been received as a result of the activities of the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Scott *[pursuant to the reply, 25 March 1994, column 452]:* Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive of the Child Support Agency, has informed me that the figure of £181 million is incorrect and should read £169 million.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many parliamentary questions to his Department have not been answered because of disproportionate costs or because the information requested was not held centrally over the last five years; how many could be answered now due to computerisation and/or more effective operational systems; and if he will list each such question along with the name and constituency of the hon. Member who tabled it.

Mr. Hague: The POLIS database has been able to identify 352 questions which were not answered on the grounds of disproportionate cost or because the information was not held centrally in the five calendar years 1989-93. Details of each of those questions can be obtained from the POLIS database in the Library. Information on how many of these could now be answered is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Animal Welfare

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures she proposes to prevent the ill-treatment of sheep imported from Spain.

Mr. Soames: No consignments of sheep for slaughter have been imported from Spain since 22 March, when this Department took immediate action to intercept a consignment and to safeguard the welfare of the animals. Close liaison was maintained with the local authorities concerned, which are investigating the case with a view to prosecution. The Welfare of Animals during Transport Order 1992 contains powers for similar action to be taken as necessary in relation to any future consignments.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what mechanisms there are to record the number of farm animals injured during transport to other EC member states.

Mr. Soames: There are no official mechanisms of this kind.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the current discussions of the Council of Agriculture Ministers on the welfare of animals during transport.

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave to the hon. Members for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) and for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) on 24 March, at column *370.*

Private Security Firms

Mr. George: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many private security firms have been employed by her Department for each of the last 10 years; what has been the annual value of the contracts; and if she will estimate how many guards have been employed for each of those years.

Mr. Jack: The following is the number of private firms employed for each financial year with the calculated annual total value of all contracts and the guards employed. The figures do not include the employment of guards on a short-term ad hoc basis.

	Number of firms	*Value (£'000)*	*Guard posts*
1984-85	7	170	18
1985-86	7	277	20
1986-87	7	297	20
1987-88	7	312	20
1988-89	7	329	20
1989-90	7	358	21
1990-91	7	469	21
1991-92	7	534	22
1992-93	8	650	23
1993-94	8	705	23

Increases in recent years in the cost of guarding is due to the provision of more comprehensive security cover at a number of vulnerable sites.

Fishermen (Subsidies)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what were the total payments to fishing vessel owners on *(a)* subsidies and support, *(b)* compensation for loss of fishing and *(c)* decommissioning in each year since 1974.

Mr. Jack: The following information on construction and modernisation grants and on decommissioning is readily available.

Construction and modernisation grants

Expenditure year by year is shown below, except that the figures prior to 1982-83 relate to grant approvals rather than to grant expenditure.

	£ million
1977-78	5·0
1978-79	5·4
1979-80	7·0
1980-81	5·2
1981-82	3·8
1982-83	8·1
1983-84	9·1
1984-85	12·3
1985-86	15·8
1986-87	19·1
1987-88	21·6
1988-89	19·8
1989-90	10·1
1990-91	7·7
1991-92	3·7
1992-93	1·2

Decommissioning

Expenditure on decommissioning between 1983 and 1986 totalled £18·4 million, and a further £7·8 million was spent under the 1993 scheme. There were no decommissioning schemes between 1974 and 1983 and between 1986 and 1993.

Grey Squirrels

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is her policy on measures to reduce grey squirrel populations in Britain.

Mr. Soames: It is not practical to reduce the number of grey squirrels over the whole of Britain. The Government's policy is, therefore, to control grey squirrels in those areas where they are causing significant damage to broad-leaved trees and in those areas where there are red squirrels present.

Grey squirrels, unlike our native red squirrels, are not a protected species. Responsibility for the general control of grey squirrels lies with individual landowners and occupiers, who are free to use any legal method of control, including traps, approved pesticides and shooting if they feel that this is necessary to prevent damage.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if she will give details of her advice to landowners wishing to kill grey squirrels;

(2) if she will specify which *(a)* poisons and *(b)* traps she advises for killing grey squirrels.

Mr. Soames: Grey squirrels, unlike our native red squirrels, are not a protected species, and they may be killed by owners and occupiers of property and land if they feel this is necessary to prevent damage. Recommended methods of killing squirrels are by poisoning or trapping.

Except in the counties specified in the Grey Squirrel (Warfarin) Order 1973, grey squirrels may be killed outdoors by the use of the anticoagulant poison warfarin. When used outdoors, the bait must be presented in a hopper of the dimensions and specification given in the 1973 order. Warfarin may be used inside a building throughout England without the use of a hopper.

Spring traps set in artificial or naturally occurring tunnels may be used but are not recommended for areas where red squirrels are present. Only traps authorised for use against squirrels under a spring trap approval order may be used. Single and multi-catch traps may be used in any part of the country for the live capture of grey squirrels and any grey squirrels so caught should be humanely despatched. It is an offence under section 14 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to release any captured grey squirrel.

Advice on controlling grey squirrels is available from both ADAS and the Forestry Commission.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence she has that grey squirrels are a problem in the British countryside.

Mr. Soames: The Forestry Commission's annual survey and the Timber Growers Association's 1991 survey both show that grey squirrels are causing serious damage to a wide range of tree species by stripping the bark from the trees and that they are threatening the success of the Government's policy for maintaining the existing broad-leaved woodlands and establishing new ones. Landowners report that they may have to stop planting trees in certain areas because grey squirrels make it impossible to establish the trees. Grey squirrels can, in some situations, cause serious damage to cereals, top and soft fruit, bulbs and root crops.

In addition, grey squirrels rob the nests of woodland nesting birds such as thrushes, tits and nuthatches, as well as killing young birds and competing for breeding sites. There is circumstantial evidence that grey squirrels compete with red squirrels and that the number of red squirrels in Britain has declined in recent years with the increase in the population of greys.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research her officials have carried out into humane methods of killing or controlling grey squirrels.

Mr. Soames: As grey squirrels cause serious damage primarily to trees, research into humane methods of killing or controlling them is carried out by the Forestry Commission.

The commission has carried out research work on the development, testing and methods of deployment of cage traps and is also undertaking research into alternative silvicultural systems which may reduce the amount of damage caused by grey squirrels. The use of reproductive inhibitors has also been investigated but a practical way of using these has not yet been found.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate has been made of the economic damage caused to forests by grey squirrels.

Mr. Soames: It is estimated that the damage to forests caused by grey squirrels leads to a loss in excess of £1 million each year.

Pest Control

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will give details of research projects funded or undertaken by her officials or the Agricultural Development Advisory Service into controlling pest species by contraceptive bait and other non-violent means.

Mr. Soames: Listed are the research projects currently funded by the Ministry on non-violent means of pest control. The Ministry does not currently undertake any research on contraceptive baits for the control of vertebrate pests. The two projects for immunocontraceptives for rabbits shown involve the development of immunocontraceptive vaccines and include oral administration of vaccines but not field baiting. Once promising vaccines have been developed, field studies including baiting will be commissioned. Preparatory field research, without the use of vaccines, is planned to begin in 1995-96 in order to collect baseline data.

The Forestry Commission is carrying out research on deer-proof fencing, repellants and the use of genetics and tree breeding to produce natural compounds to deter deer; and on the use of tree guards against rabbits.

MAFF research projects on the control of vertebrate pests by non-violent means

1. Strategic monitoring and modelling of bird pest populations to predict damage, damage limitation and the impact of agriculture on population.
2. Prevention of damage by birds using naturally occurring stimuli.
3. Predicting damage to winter wheat in relation to the density of rabbits and the timing of population control.
4. Developing humane, environmentally acceptable and cost-effective techniques for reducing rabbit numbers or otherwise preventing crop damage.
5. Modelling rabbit populations and designing control packages.
6. Uteroglobin as an immunocontraceptive vaccine.
7. Irreversible immucontraception for the control of wild rabbits.
8. Devising a procedure to be followed when badgers may have to be removed from a sett.
9. Mammalian pheromones and their use in pest control.
10. The management of mammal pests in farm woodlands.

Mink Farms

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many times her officials inspect a licensed mink farm each year to ensure compliance with the security arrangements of the Mink (Keeping) Order 1992.

Mr. Soames: Licensed mink farms are inspected at least annually by the Agriculture Development Advisory Service before a licence is renewed to ensure that the security arrangements meet the stringent requirements of the Mink (Keeping) Regulations 1975. Further inspections may be made at any time during the year to ensure that the security arrangements have not deteriorated since the last inspection.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many mink farms are currently operating in England.

Mr. Soames: As at 31 March 1994, there were 10 licensed mink farms operating in England.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many inspections were carried out by her officials last year to ensure security arrangements at licensed mink farms complied with the Mink (Keeping) Order 1992.

Mr. Soames: During the 1993-94 financial year, 17 inspections of mink farms were carried out by the Agricultural Development Advisory Service on behalf of the Ministry.

Deformed Fish (North Sea)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on recent incidents of deformed fish caught in the North sea, indicating where the fish were caught.

Mr. Jack: The Ministry has routinely monitored fish caught in the North sea for many years and there has been no recent increase in the landings of deformed fish.

Veal

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the tonnage of veal imported into Britain from *(a)* France, *(b)* Holland and *(c)* Italy in each year since 1985.

Mr. Soames: Data are available for imports into the United Kingdom of carcases, half-carcases and hindquarters and forequarters of veal and for boneless cuts from veal and this information is shown for years 1985 to 1982 in the table. Other information on cuts of veal or veal products is not available.

Imports of veal, fresh or chilled or frozen—Weight in metric tonnes

		1985	1986	[1]1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Carcases, half-carcases or "compensated" quarters of a unit weight of 136 kg or less for carcases or "compensated" quarters, or of a unit weight of not more than 68 kg for half-carcases, fresh or chilled									
	France	0	0	0	1	0	85	93	0
	Holland	131	73	41	13	8	18	6	1
	Italy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Separated or unseparated forequarters, of a unit weight of 60 kg or less for unseparated forequarters, or of a unit weight of 30 kg or less for seperate forequarters, fresh or chilled									
	France	0	0	5	157	0	20	40	156
	Holland	0	14	0	9	6	1	6	0
	Italy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

		1985	1986	[1]1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Separated or unseparated hindquarters, of a unit weight of 75 kg or less for unseparated hind-quarters, or of a unit weight of 40 kg or less for separate hindquarters, fresh or chilled									
	France	0	17	6	7	74	35	36	4
	Holland	1,303	1,275	1,356	306	532	369	441	503
	Italy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Boneless cuts from veal, fresh or chilled									
	France	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	136	152	838	489	612
	Holland	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	738	261	504	962	464
	Italy	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	0	0	0	0	11

Source: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.
[1] Discontinuities in the series between 1987 and 1988 are due to changes of classification.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many calves were exported to veal crates in *(a)* France, *(b)* Italy and *(c)* Holland; and how many in each case were exported for (i) further fattening and (ii) immediate slaughter, in each year since 1985.

Mr. Soames: No information is available on the system of husbandry for which particular consignments of calves exported from the United Kingdom are intended.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the consumption of veal in Britain in each year since 1985 which came from *(a)* Britain, *(b)* France, *(c)* Italy and *(d)* Holland.

Mr. Soames: Details of veal consumption are shown in the table.

Veal consumption in the United Kingdom – source of supply
Weight in thousand tonnes

Year	United Kingdom	France	Italy	Netherlands
1985	4·7	0·0	0·0	1·4
1986	1·8	0·0	0·0	1·4
1987	0·5	0·0	0·0	1·4
1988	0·6	0·3	0·0	1·0
1989	0·0	0·2	0·0	0·8
1990	1·5	0·9	0·0	0·9
1991	1·4	0·7	0·0	1·4
1992	1·0	0·8	0·0	1·0

There is a discontinuity in the series between 1987 and 1988 in respect of imports due to changes of classification.

Live Animals (Exports)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures she is taking to ensure that British animals exported for slaughter to Spain are killed in accordance with legislation designated to ensure humane slaughter.

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave him on 16 February, *Official Report*, column *847*.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farm animals are exported by species from Britain for *(a)* further fattening and *(b)* slaughter in each year since 1985.

Mr. Soames: Figures for exports from Great Britain in the years 1985 to 1992 are given in the following table. Figures are not available for 1993.

Animals inspected and certified as fit for transportation prior to export

	Immediate Slaughter			Further Fattening			
Year	Cattle	Sheep	Pigs	Cattle	Calves	Sheep	Pigs
1985	150	10,381	none	none	142,427	11,761	none
1986	187	154,017	none	none	190,683	7,745	1,321
1987	1.014	182,781	none	574	365,166	130,775	none
1988	136	262,647	none	323	234,651	184,120	none
1989	358	216,886	24	1,712	302,223	275,006	none
1990	175	186,038	none	284	338,806	302,871	none
1991	154	196,870	3,297	187	399,599	576,632	9,963
1992	115	326,777	691	40	420,620	1,046,880	1,911

Source: "Animal Health—Report by the Chief Veterinary Officer", reports 1985 to 1992.

Live Animals (Transport)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether records are kept of the number of farm animals which die during transport *(a)* within Britain and *(b)* to other EC member states.

Mr. Soames: Such information may be recorded in cases where possible offences against the Welfare of Animals during Transport Order 1992 were being investigated, either by inspectors of this Department or those of local authorities with enforcement responsibilities under the Animal Health Act 1981. The information is not collected centrally. The recording of deaths of animals during transport from Great Britain which occurred within the territory of another member state would be a matter for the member state concerned.

Spanish and Portuguese Accession

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) of 13 April, *Official Report*, columns *183-84*, which member states *(a)* voted against and *(b)* abstained on the vote on the

presidency compromise proposal on the procedure to be followed for amending the current arrangements applying to Spanish and Portuguese access to the waters of other member states.

Mr. Jack: The presidency compromise proposal was adopted by qualified majority. Ireland voted against. No member state indicated abstention. Formal adoption of the legal text is planned to take place at a future meeting of the Council by "A" point procedure.

Near-shore Fishing

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals she has to use the new regime of licensing for boats under 10 m to study the nature and distribution of near-shore fishing in United Kindom waters.

Mr. Jack: We shall keep activity in this sector under review.

Farm Statistics

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what proportion of *(a)* the total land mass and *(b)* the agricultural area of each English county and the counties as grouped together for the purposes of compiling the farm business survey, is designated (i) severely disadvantaged area, (ii) disadvantaged area and (iii) less-favoured area; and what are the figures for England as a whole;

(2) what is the total hectarage of agricultural land for *(a)* each English county and *(b)* each farm business survey county group, which is designated (i) severely disadvantaged area, (ii) disadvantaged area and *(c)* less-favoured area according to the most recent unweighted figures from the annual farm census.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 20 April 1994]:* The table provides the total hectarage of agricultural land on holdings designated as SDA, DA and LFA, as well as the proportions of total land mass and total agricultural area designated as SDA, DA and LFA, by English county and FBS province in 1992. The area of common rough grazing has been excluded from the figures of agricultural area as details are not available to show the breakdown between SDA, DA and non-LFA land.

Estimates of the total agricultural land (a) by county and FBS province in 1992

FBS province	County	Total agricultural land designated as: SDA (hectares)	DA (hectares)	LFA (hectares)	Proportion of total land mass (b) designated as: SDA (per cent.)	DA (per cent.)	LFA (per cent.)	Proportion of agricultural area designated as: SDA (per cent.)	DA (per cent.)	LFA (per cent.)
East Midland	Derbyshire	67,759	13,824	81,583	26	5	31	37	8	44
		67,759	13,824	81,583	4	1	5	6	1	7
Northern	Cumbria	192,312	40,427	232,740	28	6	34	42	9	51
	Durham	77,440	11,873	89,312	32	5	37	49	8	57
	Northumberland	235,296	23,594	258,890	47	5	51	62	6	68
		505,048	75,894	580,942	34	5	39	50	7	57
North Eastern	Cleveland	7,062	1,766	8,827	12	3	15	25	6	31
	North Yorkshire	159,269	47,565	206,834	19	6	25	25	7	32
	South Yorkshire	8,810	6,141	14,951	6	4	10	11	7	18
	West Yorkshire	29,993	9,305	39,298	15	5	19	30	9	39
		205,134	64,776	296,910	13	4	17	19	6	25
North Western	Cheshire	8,812	1,619	10,431	4	1	4	5	1	6
	Greater Manchester	6,992	4,873	11,865	5	4	9	17	12	29
	Lancashire	59,869	41,076	100,944	20	13	33	27	19	45
	Shropshire	29,001	13,632	42,533	8	4	12	10	5	15
	Staffordshire	12,711	17,732	30,443	5	7	11	6	9	15
		117,384	78,832	196,216	9	6	14	13	8	21
Southern	Hereford and Worcester	10,689	6,518	17,207	3	2	4	3	2	6
		10,689	6,518	17,207	..	..	1	1	..	1
South Western	Cornwall (including Isles of Scilly)	11,171	43,878	55,048	3	12	16	4	16	20
	Devon	71,394	63,743	135,137	11	9	20	14	12	26
	Somerset	31,419	2,038	33,457	9	1	10	11	1	12
		113,983	109,659	223,642	7	7	14	9	9	18
England		1,019,999	349,604	1,369,500	8	3	11	11	4	15

..Less than 0·5 per cent.
*(a)*Area on main holdings with land in the SDA or DA excluding common rough grazing
*(b)*Including inland water
Sources: Agricultural Census, Municipal yearbook

Trade Statistics

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many calves were exported to other member states in each year since 1985.

Mr. Soames: The numbers of calves from the United Kingdom that have been exported to other member states of the EC since 1985 can be found in the annual volumes of the "Overseas Trade Statistics for the United Kingdom", copies of which are in the House of Commons Library. Details of their classification within standard industrial waste classification 00 can be found in the "Guide to the Classification for Overseas Trade Statistics", which is also in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many live farm animals were exported abroad in each year since 1985; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The numbers of live animals from the United Kingdom that have been exported abroad since 1985 can be found in the annual volumes of the "Overseas Trade Statistics for the United Kingdom", copies of which are in the House of Commons Library. Details of their classification within SITC 00 can be found in the "Guide to the classification for Overseas Trade Statistics", which is also in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what the tonnage of *(a)* lamb and *(b)* beef was imported into Britain from other member states in each year since 1985.

Mr. Soames: The tonnage of lamb and beef imported into the United Kingdom from other member states of the EC since 1985 can be found in the annual volumes of the "Overseas Trade Statistics for the United Kingdom", copies of which are in the House of Commons Library. Details of their classification within SITC 00 can be found in the "Guide to the classification for Overseas Trade Statistics", which is also in the House of Commons Library.

DEFENCE

Private Security Firms

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many private security firms have been employed by his Department for each of the last 10 years; what has been the annual value of the contracts; and if he will estimate how many guards have been employed for each of those years.

Mr. Hanley: The number of private security firms employed by my Department over the last 10 years and the annual value of contracts are as follows:

	Number of firms	*Annual value of contracts (£)*
1984-85	7	350,000
1985-86	9	600,000
1986-87	11	1,100,000
1987-88	10	1,350,000
1988-89	21	1,900,000
1989-90	17	4,841,000
1990-91	16	4,760,000
1991-92	16	4,532,000
1992-93	14	5,136,000
1993-94	15	6,535,000

The number of guards used by a private firm in meeting its contractual requirement is a matter of judgment for the firm itself. Central records are not held by my Department of the number of private guards employed.

Sailing Ships

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the expenditure by his Department on the construction of sailingn ships in each of the past 10 years; if he will give details of the names of such ships, their current use and what proportion of the cost of such ships was met by his Department.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 18 March 1994]:* The MOD has procured 41 sail training craft for the services from public funds over the past 10 years. Sail training craft are procured for a number of training uses for service men and women including sea sense training, resource and initiative training, leadership training and adventurous sail training.

Expenditure on these craft in each of the past 10 years is as follows:

Financial year	*£*
1984-85	54,000
1985-86	Nil
1986-87	Nil
1987-88	135,519
1988-89	Nil
1989-90	77,156
1990-91	1,202,225
1991-92	608,129
1992-93	533,754
1993-94	155,911

The names of the craft and their current deployment are as follows:

Amaryllis of Dart—Army Sailing Association
Amaryllis of Dartmouth—Britannia Royal Naval College
Amoria—HMS Hornet Gosport
Callista—HMS Hornet Gosport
Cornish Air—Royal Naval Air Station, Culdrose
Disinia—HMS Hornet, Gosport
Ebsis—HMS Hornet, Gosport
Fimbra—HMS Hornet, Gosport
Foxbat—HMS Sultan, Gosport
Foxbrush—HMS Raleigh, Plymouth
Foxchase—HMS Raleigh, Plymouth
Foxcub—HMS Raleigh, Plymouth
Foxdale—HMS Raleigh, Plymouth
Foxfield—HMS Raleigh, Plymouth
Foxfire—HMS Raleigh, Plymouth
Foxglove—HMS Raleigh, Plymouth
Foxhole—HMS Raleigh, Plymouth
Foxhound—HMS Raleigh, Plymouth
Foxhunt—HMS Sultan, Gosport
Foxlane, HMS Raleigh, Plymouth
Foxmark—HMS Raleigh, Plymouth
Foxtor—HMS Raleigh, Plymouth
Gauntlet of Plymouth—Royal Naval Engineering College, Manadon

Heads I Win—HMS Raleigh, Plymouth
Head Over Heels—HMS Raleigh, Plymouth
Headstrong—HMS Raleigh, Plymouth
Hedonist—HMS Raleigh, Plymouth
Janthia—HMS Hornet, Gosport
Lambis—HMS Hornet, Gosport
Mitra—HMS Hornet, Gosport
Nerita—HMS Hornet, Gosport
Olympus—HMS Sultan, Gosport
Placunda—HMS Hornet—Gosport
Proteus—HMS Sultan, Gosport
Rapana—HMS Hornet, Gosport
Redcoat 2—Commander British Forces, Hong Kong
Sarie Marais 2—Royal Marines, Stonehouse, Plymouth
Syrinx—HMS Hornet, Gosport
Trochus—HMS Hornet, Gosport
Voluta—HMS Hornet, Gosport
Zidona—HMS Hornet, Gosport

Ministry of Defence Police

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to whom the report to be produced by the committee on the future of the Ministry of Defence police chaired by Mr. Blelloch will report; when it is expected to be finalised; and if it will be published.

Mr. Hanley: I have nothing further to add to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) on 15 December 1993, *Official Report*, columns *738-39*.

RAF Chivenor

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what delegations from North Devon he has received or has appointments to receive to discuss the future of RAF Chivenor;

(2) what alternative uses he has recently considered for the site of RAF Chivenor.

Mr. Hanley: I met the hon. Member and a number of North Devon county councillors on 17 January 1994. There are no current plans to meet any further delegations.

RAF Chivenor will continue to house a search and rescue flight. From 1 July 1994 this will be upgraded to a 24-hour Sea King flight. In addition, the site will continue to be considered for any possible alternative defence requirement that might arise.

Nuclear Weapons Exercises

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has made to the United States authorities regarding the possibility of their publishing contingency planning information on exercises conducted with American nuclear weapons in the United Kingdom along the lines of information published in this area by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Hanley: My Department has made no such representations. A document issued by the MOD in December 1992 and distributed to local authorities and emergency services already gives relevant guidance on the actions to be taken in the event of any transport accident in the United Kingdom involving a nuclear weapon. A copy of this document—"Local Authority and Emergency Service Information on Nuclear Weapon Transport Contingency Plans"—is also in the Library of the House.

Exercise Diver Mist

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what arrangements have been made for the media to *(a)* participate in the Diver Mist nuclear weapons accident exercise and *(b)* report on the activities and outcome of the Diver Mist exercise;

(2) if he will place in the Library a copy of the Diver Mist nuclear weapons emergency exercise scenario.

(3) if he will place in the Library an unclassified version of his Departmental report evaluating the Diver Mist nuclear weapons accident exercise conducted in East Anglia 18 to 22 April;

(4) which military authorities will participate in the Diver Mist nuclear weapons accident exercise on 18 to 22 April in East Anglia;

(5) which emergency plans will be tested during the Diver Mist nuclear accident exercise in East Anglia on 18 to 22 April;

(6) what are the objectives of the joint United Kingdom/United States nuclear weapon accident exercise Diver Mist due to take place near Thetford on 18 to 24 April;

(7) if he will list the observers invited to attend the Diver Mist nuclear weapons accident exercise in East Anglia on 18 to 22 April.

Mr. Hanley: The accident scenario for Exercise Diver Mist was based on a crash of a United States transport aircraft carrying nuclear weapons in United Kingdom airspace. The objective was to exercise the combined response of relevant United Kingdom and United States Government Departments and local authorities and civil emergency services to a nuclear weapon transport accident, and as such it offered the opportunity to test relevant United Kingdom-United States and national contingency plans, as well as the major incident plans of local authorities and emergency services. The exercise involved the participation of the MOD's nuclear accident response organisation, which includes military units and personnel with relevant capabilities from all three services. United States military forces with similar capabilities also participated. I attended the exercise to provide the parliamentary and political dimension.

Observers from relevant central Government Departments, local authorities and emergency services, and from United States federal authorities were invited to attend the exercise. Media participation in the circumstances created by the exercise scenario was simulated by exercise players, who included reservists who are journalists by profession. In addition, a briefing attended by representatives of the local media was held on 17 April to explan the scope and purpose of the exercise.

The post-exercise report will be a classified document.

Nuclear Weapon Accidents

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will seek from his United States counterpart a copy of the United States Department of Defence manual on nuclear weapon accident response procedures; and if he will place it in the Library.

Mr. Hanley: I will arrange for a copy of this document to be placed in the Library of the House.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who are the members currently appointed to the Anglo/Scottish/Welsh-American community relations committees.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 28 January 1994]:* The members currently appointed to the Anglo/Scottish/Welsh-American community relations committees are as follows:

Cliff Woodhead
Michael Behagg
Mrs. Carol Booker
Mrs. Kay Dunn
Mrs. Sue Parkin
David Parsons
Dr. Irwin Peck
Richard Scantlebury
Bob Seery
J. F. Green, OBE TD
E. Jenkins, MBE
D. Mayman
L. Jones
Sir Stanley Odell
Mrs. Gee Bird
Mrs. Meg Bennett
Mrs. Cherry Jephson
James Leaver
Richard Parrish
Wing Commander Chris Taylor RAF (Retd)
The Hon Mrs. Bing
Hon. Sherriff Willie Johnston, MBE, JP
Dr. Ion Grove-White
Hugh A. C. Adamson
Mrs. Rose Rickman
Peter Arkell
Mrs. Linda Jones
Mark Whittering
David Marshall
Eustace Crawley
Alec Faulds
Brendan Fulham
Councillor Mrs. Eileen Jacob
Councillor Mrs. Carol Lynch
Mrs. Maya Morriss
Bruce Rutterford
Jack Haylock, MBE
Nick Berry
Sheila Bonnett
Dr. Colin Dring
Edward Kydd
Canon David Merkle
David Minns
Ken Thompson
John Zeal
A. I. Rabey
Mrs. S. J. Christopher
D. Curnow
Captain E. T. Denholm RN (Retd)
D. James
Superintendent K. H. Shepperd
Charles Parker
Mrs. Josè
Canon Hewitt Wilson
Group Captain James Marmion RAF (Retd)
Superintendent Alan Partridge
The Earl of Swinton
John A. Winter
Mrs. Heather Manton
Mrs. Kathleen Wood
Mrs. Katherine Lovell
Mr. Roger K. Linfoot

Capital Projects (Expenditure)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the reasons for the variations between current and original estimated expenditures on the capital projects at *(a)* Minley/Chatham barracks, *(b)* Dishforth, accommodation for Army Air Corps, *(c)* Tidworth, infrastructure and tank road, and *(d)* Wattisham (RAF), change of role, as listed on page 19 of Command 276-1.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 15 April 1994]:* The reduction in estimated costs for the Minley/Chatham, Dishforth and Tidworth capital works projects is due to the refinement of the original estimates as the design has developed, coupled with lower than forecast project management fees. Also, competitive tendering has resulted in works contracts being let at significantly lower prices than was originally estimated. Indeed, estimates for all three projects have continued to fall and are now as follows:

Minley/Chatham Barracks—£28,467,000
Dishforth—£31,283,000
Tidworth—£27,004,000

In the case of the Wattisham project, the current estimated project cost is £46,150,000, which represents a reduction against the estimate shown on page 19 of Command 276-1. This still, however, represents an increase over the original project cost. That is due to the fact that financial provision for a new build of married quarters was not included in the original estimate as the requirement for domestic accommodation had not been defined at that point in time. Provision had, however, been made separately to cover overall married quarter requirements resulting from the return of forces from Germany, including the two regiments moving to Wattisham.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 26 April 1994

TREASURY

Shipping

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received on measures to improve the competitive position of the United Kingdom shipping fleet; and what measures he plans to introduce.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave to the hon. Members for Dover (Mr. Shaw) and for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley) on 21 April at columns *597-98*, and the hon. Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) on 22 April at columns *691-92*.

Property Revaluation

Mr. Cann: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 19 April, *Official Report*, column *424*, what is his estimate of the number of households potentially affected by the decision regarding retrospective revaluation of property.

Sir John Cope: Details of the number of dwellings which are likely to have their original bandings altered as a consequence of a sale in their locality have not been collected. However, I would expect the number of such alterations to represent only a very small fraction of the total number of alterations made to valuation lists.

Occupational Pensions

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the average income, occupational pension and income tax liability of the top 1 per cent., top 5 per cent. and top 10 per cent. of people in receipt of occupational pensions.

Mr. Dorrell: Latest available estimates using the 1991-92 survey of personal incomes are given in the table.

People in receipt of an occupational pension ranged by amount of occupational pension	*Average amount of income (£)*	*Average amount of occupational pension (£)*	*Average income tax liability[1] (£)*
Top 1 per cent.	54,400	30,000	9,100
Top 5 per cent.	30,100	17,600	4,600
Top 10 per cent.	23,300	13,600	3,300

[1] The figures are the tax liability on occupational pensions assuming that they represent the top slice of taxable income.

Farm Loss Offset

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many farming enterprises have been allowed by Her Majesty's inspectors of taxes an extension of farm loss offset into the sixth and subsequent years in each of the last three tax years for which figures are available.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is not available.

Newcastle Tax Offices (Staff)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the staff of each Newcastle tax office on *(a)* 1 April 1993 and *(b)*1 April 1994; and if he will explain the cause of changes since April 1992.

Mr. Dorrell: The numbers of staff-in-post at the relevant dates are shown in the table.

	1 April 1993	*1 April 1994*
Newcastle 1	153	135
Newcastle 2	25	22
Newcastle 3	65	57
Newcastle 4	86	79
Total	329	293

The comparable total staff-in-post for the four offices at 1 April 1992 was 341. Between 1 April 1992 and 1 April 1994 there has been a reduction of 48 staff-in-post.

About half the reduction relates to typists and secretaries.

The 1 April 1994 figures exclude almost all typing and secretarial staff included at 1 April 1993. Inland Revenue North has carried out an efficiency scrutiny of its typing and secretarial services. Of 24 typists and secretaries in post at 1 April 1993 in the four Newcastle tax offices, two remain, 13 have transferred to other locations—including the Tyneside pool which handles Newcastle work—seven were offered, and accepted voluntary severance terms and two left the department for other reasons.

Reasons for the remaining staff reductions in Newcastle tax offices include a reduced workbase reflecting a decrease in the number of schedule E and schedule D taxpayers the offices deal with, the transfer of trust work to a new office in Nottingham which specialises in such work and other procedural changes including simplification of end of year work on PAYE.

French Trade Surplus

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the relationship between the figures for the French trade surplus for the United Kingdom in the first half of 1993 as published in revised Intrastat figures in the Eurostat news letter "Edicom/Intrastat (1/94)" and the Central Statistical Office figures for the surplus and what assessment he has made of the effect of any discrepancy on the United Kingdom balance of payments deficit.

Sir John Cope: Figures in the Eurostat news letter are based on information supplied by member states, but they are, for many countries including the United Kingdom, incomplete. They include only data actually reported by traders without any estimates for the value of non-response or for traders operating below the Intrastat thresholds. As such, they are of limited usefulness. The Central Statistical Office publications include estimates for these amounts, and in its first release, the data are also shown on a consistent basis as used for the compilation of balance of payments estimates.

I have already announced that a full quality assurance programme on the United Kingdom's Intrastat figures is under way. One part of this involves detailed comparisons of the estimates from the United Kingdom, France, Germany and the Netherlands. However, results from this will not be available until later in the year.

National Price Index

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the towns in which food prices are checked for information to compile the national price index.

Sir John Cope: Prices for the retail prices index are collected from the areas around the local employment service offices given below:

Areas used for monthly collection of prices for the retail prices index:

Camden
Hammersmith
Westminster
Chiswick
Finchley
Hendon
Hounslow
Wood Green
Chelmsford
Harlow
Basildon
Southend
Bedford
Bromley
Bexleyheath
Cromer
Spalding
Derby
Loughborough
Melton Morwbray
Leicester
Grimsby
Hull
Leeds
Sheffield
Barnsley
Batley
Bradford
Goole
Halifax
Huddersfield
Keighley
Selby
York
Northallerton
Scarborough
Altrincham
Birkenhead
Ellesmere Port
Northwick
Stockport
Buxton
Manchester
Blackburn
Blackpool
Bolton
Burnley
Chorley
Washington
Newcastle
Llanelli
Portmadog
Cardigan
Llangollen
Wrexham
Caerphilly
Cardiff
Maesteg
Merthyr Tydfil
Swansea
Newport
Dagenham
East Ham
Ilford
Woolwich
Watford
Newport, Isle of Wight
Oxford
Portsmouth
Winchester
Croydon
Kingston
Wimbledon
Denton
Lancaster
Leigh
Aintree
Oldham
St. Helens
Preston
Stretford
Diss
Norwich
Thetford
Cambridge
Wisbech
Peterborough
Bungay
Bury St. Edmunds
Ipswich
Leiston
Bodmin
Redruth
St. Austell
Exeter
Honiton
Plymouth
Bournemouth
Burnham
Taunton
Yeovil
Cheltenham
Bristol
Stroud
Weymouth
Sailsbury
Trowbridge
Swindon
Kings Heath
Pembroke Dock
Ayr
Dumfries
Parkhead
Maryhill
Leith
Musselburgh
Rothesay
Aberdeen
Arbroath
Dundee
Wick
Reading
Southampton
High Wycombe
Milton Keynes
Brighton
Chichester
Crawley
Eastbourne
Chatham
Dover
Harrow
Luton
Shrewsbury
Hanley
Leek
Lichfield
Stafford
Birmingham
Coventry
Handsworth
Nuneaton
Rugby
Walsall
Hereford
Dudley
Halesowen
Kidderminster
Worcester
Daventry
Northampton
Glossop
Nottingham
Worksop
Lincoln
Liverpool
Carlisle
Maryport
Penrith
Darlington
Kendal
Alnwick
Berwick
Blyth
Barrow
Middlesborough
Bishop Auckland
Gateshead
Sunderland
Glenrothes
Elgin
Perth
Galashiels
Grangemouth
Motherwell
Belfast
Omagh
Ballymena
Bangor
Portdown

Building Societies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to ensure that building societies routinely inform savers when their accounts become obsolete.

Sir John Cope: How building societies choose to communicate with their members is a matter for them. A number of societies routinely transfer customers from obsolete accounts to the nearest equivalent active one. Sections 6.1 to 6.3 of the revised voluntary code of banking

practice, published in March, set out standard practice for informing customers of the rates of interest paid on accounts. A copy of the code is in the Library.

Employees (Criminal Charges)

Mr. Byers: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on how many occasions in the past five years his Department has suspended employees from duty without pay when they have been charged with a criminal offence but are still awaiting trial.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 22 April 1994]:* In the last five years there has been one case of an employee of the Treasury suspended without pay when charged with a criminal offence but still awaiting trial.

Royal Palaces (Rating)

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which grace-and-favour accommodation at the occupied and at the unoccupied royal palaces were liable to pay rates under the rates system of local government taxation; and on what basis it was assessed.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 25 April 1994]:* Under the rates system for domestic property in England and Wales which came to an end in March 1990 all grace and favour accommodation at the royal palaces which was occupied was liable to pay domestic rates. When accommodation, including grace and favour accommodation, was unoccupied no rates were payable. In Scotland the same position applied prior to the introduction of the community charge in April 1989. The basis of assessment was the same as for other domestic property, namely its annual rental value subject to deduction for assumed liability for repair.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to make feline spongiform encephalopathy a notifiable disease; and how many cases she is aware of in each of the last five years.

Mr. Soames: Bovine spongiform encephalopathy in bovines, and scrapie in sheep and goats, are already compulsorily notifiable. We have consulted interested organisations on proposals that would mean that when a naturally occurring spongiform encephalopathy is suspected in any animal following laboratory examination of material, that suspicion should be notified to the Ministry. Legislation is being prepared on this.

The number of cases of feline spongiform encephalopathy to date by year of onset of clinical signs is as follows:

Year of Onset	*Number of cases*
1989	1
1990	16
1991	9
1992	14
1993	8

Cases were not necessarily confirmed in the same year that clinical signs were first observed. The first case of FSE was confirmed in May 1990.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many reports she has received about spongiform encephalopathy in canines and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The Ministry has received no reports of confirmed cases of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies in canines.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement about bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Soames: A further report on BSE in Great Britain is available today. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library of the House. The report details the continuing epidemiological evidence that the ruminant feed ban is effective in controlling the epidemic in the way which has been predicted. The number of reported cases up to 18 March 1994 is 19·9 per cent. below that of the same period in 1993—8,585 in 1994 compared with 10,718 in 1993—and 14·9 per cent. below 1992. The report also gives information about the wide-ranging research programme being undertaken by the Ministry, particularly relating to the transmission of the disease and tissue infectivity studies.

Lamb and Sheep

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what tonnage of domestically reared lamb and sheep was produced in the United Kingdom for each year since 1979;

(2) what quantity of domestically reared lamb and sheep exports were transported abroad *(a)* live and *(b)* dead in each year since 1979.

Mr. Soames: Details of domestic lamb and sheep production, and exports, are shown in the table.

United Kingdom production and export of mutton and lamb
Units: Thousand tonnes (meat equivalent)

	Domestically reared lamb and sheep production[1]	*Exports*[2]	
		Carcase meat	*Live*
1979	238·7	40·9	7·7
1980	289·6	36·9	12·9
1981	272·6	37·5	14·0
1982	276·1	37·0	11·9
1983	297·5	43·3	10·7
1984	298·4	47·4	10·5
1985	313·7	48·8	10·5
1986	300·9	60·1	11·5
1987	310·8	71·2	19·3
1988	342·2	76·0	20·4
1989	385·4	89·4	19·9
1990	393·2	79·6	23·5
1991	418·0	79·9	33·0
1992	392·4	106·0	39·8
1993	377·1	129·1	45·9

[1] Figures include an estimate for unrecorded exports from Northern Ireland to the Irish Republic.
[2] Boneless items adjusted to carcase weight equivalent from 1985 (inclusive) onwards.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Arts Council Lottery Committee

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what are the qualifications and work experience of Mr. Gummer, recently appointed to head the Arts Council lottery committee.

Mr. Brooke: Mr. Gummer was first appointed as a member of the Arts Council of Great Britain in 1991 and in March I appointed him as one of the first members of the Arts Council of England. Mr. Gummer's wide-ranging interest in the arts and his business and financial experience admirably qualify him to be chairman of the Arts Council's national lottery advisory panel.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Diver Mist

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many personnel from his Department were involved in Exercise Diver Mist; in what capacities they served; and what was the cost to his Department of this involvement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Work was undertaken by four Home Office staff as part of their normal duties and is not therefore costed. Two of those staff were involved in the planning of the exercise and three observed different aspects of the exercise.

House of Lords

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will bring forward plans to abolish or reform the House of Lords; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No.

Criminal Funds, Soviet Union

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what mechanisms are in place to prevent any influx of funds into the United Kingdom generated by criminal activities in the former Soviet Union.

Mr. Maclean: New legislation which came into force earlier this year requires banks and other financial institutions to report knowledge or suspicion of drug money laundering to the law enforcement agencies and ecourages them to report other suspicious transactions without fear of prosecution for breach of customer confidentiality. It also makes the laundering of the proceeds of any serious crime a criminal offence. The National Criminal Intelligence Service, which receives all reports of suspicious transactions, and HM Customs and Excise have established channels of communications which enable them to co-operate with their counterparts in Russia and other countries in the former Soviet Union.

Mediation

Mr. Keith Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what assessment he has made of the extent to which mediation could be used as a more cost-effective means of resolving disputes than court proceedings;

(2) what assessment he has made of the number of disputes which result in criminal cases where mediation would have resolved the dispute in a more cost-effective manner.

Mr. Maclean: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) on 8 March, *Official Report*, column *174*. No comprehensive assessment has been made of the number of cases where mediation might have proved more cost effective than criminal proceedings.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 8 March, *Official Report*, column *174*, to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill, if he will publish the report of the inter-departmental working group on mediation in the criminal justice system.

Mr. Maclean: No. The report of the interdepartmental working group, to which I referred in my answer to the hon. Member's question on 8 March, *Official Report*, column *174*, examined a wide range of criminal justice issues in addition to its consideration of the possible value of mediation. It is an internal document prepared as advice for Ministers.

Dumper Truck Report

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the circumstances in which a dumper truck was driven on to the railway line at West Drayton on Sunday 10 April and the action which the police are taking to trace and arrest those responsible; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the Commissioner that his officers made the initial response to this incident, but that the matter is now being investigated by the British Transport police. It appears that at about 8 pm on Sunday, 10 April 1994, some youths entered a plant-hire site next to West Drayton railway station. A number of vehicles were driven around the site, causing damage; one was driven through the perimeter fence onto the adjacent railway line. It was driven off the line by one of the youths before the next train passed. The British Transport police have identified a number of witnesses and have interviewed two youths. No charges have yet been brought.

Police Officers

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give an ethnic breakdown of police officers in each force in England and Wales in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1985, *(c)* 1990 and *(d)* 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information in the table is derived from the monthly strength returns provided to the Home Office by all police forces.

White and Ethnic minority officer strength in England and Wales for 1980, 1985, 1990 and 1993
As at 31 December

Police Force	1980		1985		1990		1993	
	White	Ethnic	White	Ethnic	White	Ethnic	White	Ethnic
Avon and Somerset	2,958	4	2,956	9	3,037	22	3,010	24
Bedordshire	953	10	963	19	1,028	36	1,135	33
Cambridgeshire	1,086	0	1,130	11	1,163	23	1,238	28
Cheshire	1,832	1	1,803	0	1,894	4	1,871	2
Cleveland	1,453	1	1,457	4	1,476	9	1,400	14
Cumbria	1,103	1	1,118	2	1,187	2	1,182	3
Derbyshire	1,827	5	1,751	14	1,728	23	1,759	31
Devon and Cornwall	2,721	0	2,745	2	2,865	2	2,904	4
Dorset	1,167	0	1,201	1	1,269	3	1,289	3
Durham	1,345	0	1,293	0	1,361	3	1,382	7
Dyfed Powys	929	0	924	0	936	0	966	0
Essex	2,600	9	2,670	8	2,866	18	2,920	27
Gloucestershire	1,116	3	1,146	5	1,146	12	1,126	14
Greater Manchester	6,906	17	6,729	50	6,893	117	6,916	131
Gwent	971	2	970	1	996	5	981	8
Hampshire	3,055	3	3,059	9	3,161	9	3,245	25
Hertfordshire	1,512	6	1,571	13	1,642	17	1,659	20
Humberside	1,950	1	1,933	3	1,986	3	2,019	9
Kent	2,866	5	2,849	10	2,979	9	3,170	12
Lancashire	3,120	0	2,999	5	3,177	22	3,108	32
Leicestershire	1,706	14	1,723	27	1,738	46	1,772	66
Lincolnshire	1,183	0	1,141	0	1,205	0	1,197	6
Merseyside	4,585	6	4,533	21	4,633	46	4,592	71
Norfolk	1,249	0	1,263	0	1,394	0	1,434	0
Northamptonshire	967	4	1,036	11	1,127	17	1,159	22
Northumbria	3,335	5	3,361	7	3,516	12	3,570	19
North Wales	1,290	0	1,250	1	1,338	1	1,340	1
North Yorkshire	1,352	0	1,352	1	1,377	2	1,327	6
Nottinghamshire	2,201	8	2,188	26	2,291	51	2,282	55
South Wales	3,067	1	3,055	9	3,108	15	3,117	25
South Yorkshire	2,842	0	2,837	13	2,963	21	2,977	38
Staffordshire	2,067	4	2,093	9	2,175	18	2,174	28
Suffolk	1,121	1	1,130	1	1,189	6	1,207	9
Surrey	1,589	0	1,624	3	1,646	8	1,648	19
Sussex	2,822	1	2,790	0	2,975	9	2,959	18
Thames Valley	3,037	6	3,251	32	3,657	49	3,832	62
Warwickshire	913	3	934	5	1,005	9	1,009	16
West Mercia	1,933	6	1,915	9	2,005	17	2,033	23
West Midlands	6,497	42	6,462	93	6,716	165	6,740	228
West Yorkshire	5,030	10	5,015	34	5,188	88	4,892	96
Wiltshire	1,030	2	1,023	5	1,148	9	1,261	12
City of London	841	2	781	1	789	7	873	11
Metropolitan	23,501	107	26,418	287	27,669	483	26,955	650
TOTAL	115,628	290	118,412	761	123,642	1,418	124,630	1,908

Winson Green Prison

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to relieve the pressure on capacity at Winson Green prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Robert Ainsworth, dated 26 April 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about capacity at Winson Green prison.

The certified normal accommodation for Birmingham prison is 562. On 20 April 1994, 733 prisoners were held at Birmingham, which was 64 less than the operational capacity of 797. Operational capacity is the total number of prisoners which an establishment can hold while sustaining good order, security and the proper running of the planned regime.

Some 150 additional places will be available at Birmingham later this year when current refurbishment work in G Wing is completed.

Lorry Ban

Sir Michael Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many extra police will be deployed in residential roads in London to enforce the lorry ban following the end of the exemption permit system for lorries operated by the London borough transport scheme.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The deployment of police officers for the enforcement of the London lorry ban is an operational matter for the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.

Caution-plus Schemes

Mr. Keith Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are his plans to safeguard victims and offenders in caution-plus schemes by maintaining practice standards such as those developed by Mediation UK.

Mr. Maclean: We have at present no plans to issue or comment particular practice standards. The relatively few caution-plus schemes now operating are diverse in character and their value is still being assessed.

Criminal Cases

Mr. Keith Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number and proportion of criminal cases in which the victim and the defendant are known to each other.

Mr. Maclean: This information is not generally available centrally, except for the small number of offences such as incest where such a relationship can be assumed. In the case of offences of homicide, however, more extensive statistics are kept including details of known suspects and their relationship to victims.

Voluntary Services Unit

Mr. Keith Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which voluntary organisations are currently funded by the voluntary services unit.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The voluntary services unit currently funds the following voluntary organisations:

Action—Employees in the Community.
Association for Research in the Voluntary and Community Sector.
Association of Chief Executives of National Voluntary Organisations.
Association of Community Trusts and Foundations.
British Association of Settlements and Social Action Centres.
Bromley by Bow Centre.
Charities Evaluation Services.
Community Development Foundation.
Community Matters.
Community Radio Association.
Community Service Volunteers.
Federation of Community Work Training Groups.
Festival Welfare Services.
Homeless Network.
Institute of Charity Fundraising Managers.
Kent Committee for the Welfare of Migrants.
Midland Refugee Council.
National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service.
National Association of Volunteer Bureaux.
National Council for Voluntary Organisations.
National Federation of City Farms.
National Playbus Association.
National Youth Agency.
North East Refugee Service.
Northern Refugee Centre.
Refugee Action.
Refugee Arrivals Project.
Refugee Council.
Resource Unit to promote Black Volunteering.
Retired Executives Action Clearing House.
Reunite.
Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations.
Scottish Refugee Council.
SIA.
Standing Conference for Community Development.
Student Community Action Development Unit.
Volunteer Centre (UK).
Volunteer Development Scotland.
Welsh Refugee Council.
West Indian Standing Conference.
Womens Royal Voluntary Service.

Director General of the Prison Service

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what performance bonuses were awarded to the Director General of the Prison Service in 1993.

Mr. Michael Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) on 1 December 1993, *Official Report*, column 626.

Private Security Firms

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many private security firms have been employed by his Department for each of the last 10 years; what has been the annual value of the contracts; and if he will estimate how many guards have been employed for each of those years.

Mr. Howard: In keeping with Government policy, my Department contracts out a number of services such as security guarding at non-sensitive sites where it is cost-effective to do so. These contracts cover services to escort and detain—under the authority of the Immigration Service—persons held under the Immigration Act 1971, to safeguard cash in transit from banks to Home Office establishments at various locations and to safeguard some premises.

The number of personnel employed by contractors varies according to demand. I regret that it is not possible to provide the value of contracts over the last 10 years as no central record of cost of the services is maintained.

The available information is as follows:

	£
Police Staff College	286,800
Fire Service College	109,000
Emergency Planning College	98,000
Police Scientific Development Branch (Sandridge)	15,000

Crime Statistics

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many crimes were recorded in each category of crime by each police force in England and Wales in 1993.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is given in the table.

England and Wales

Notifiable offences recorded by the police

	Total	*Violence against the person*	*Sexual offences*	*Robbery*	*Burglary*	*Theft and handling stolen goods*	*Fraud and forgery*	*Criminal damage*	*Other*
Avon and Somerset	175,946	5,772	894	1,863	40,655	99,371	5,011	21,635	745
Bedfordshire	58,847	1,936	417	543	15,596	30,479	2,308	7,265	303
Cambridgeshire	65,807	2,821	393	308	15,023	37,726	1,786	7,326	424
Cheshire	80,156	2,975	465	345	22,034	38,653	2,693	11,913	1,078
Cleveland	78,279	2,227	216	336	18,738	41,246	1,496	13,694	326

	Total	Violence against the person	Sexual offences	Robbery	Burglary	Theft and handling stolen goods	Fraud and forgery	Criminal damage	Other
Cumbria	43,744	1,935	246	91	10,733	21,706	1,013	7,645	375
Derbyshire	91,454	4,097	478	357	25,612	42,739	1,641	15,837	693
Devon and Cornwall	121,026	4,114	985	423	32,578	62,082	3,837	15,847	1,160
Dorset	51,091	1,736	319	135	9,625	29,686	3,771	5,955	864
Durham	67,180	2,406	495	164	13,677	35,266	2,894	11,580	698
Essex	114,435	4,188	709	430	27,149	60,842	3,007	17,293	817
Gloucestershire	60,985	1,759	314	303	17,294	33,123	2,368	5,363	461
Greater Manchester	364,858	10,049	1,357	5,424	97,850	175,808	10,268	61,406	2,696
Hampshire	147,074	5,328	1,406	564	33,066	77,871	5,280	22,179	1,380
Hertfordshire	56,868	1,919	275	273	13,419	29,706	1,525	9,339	412
Humberside	140,988	4,955	798	526	48,031	63,057	3,386	19,784	451
Kent	161,787	6,185	942	631	30,743	90,245	4,265	27,305	1,471
Lancashire	134,581	3,134	469	540	29,550	70,615	3,407	25,881	985
Leicestershire	99,863	3,749	471	1,039	25,210	51,285	3,526	14,068	515
Lincolnshire	52,664	2,282	313	158	13,008	26,397	1,288	8,560	658
London, City of	5,620	238	23	51	778	3,703	487	258	82
Merseyside	142,325	7,359	768	2,204	33,688	68,217	4,964	23,481	1,644
Metropolitan police district	914,312	39,900	6,496	24,915	175,184	450,575	34,580	175,821	6,841
Norfolk	64,319	2,044	366	217	18,178	33,700	1,633	7,705	476
Northamptonshire	59,850	2,633	291	301	15,944	28,880	1,813	9,539	449
Northumbria	213,936	6,358	713	1,227	63,007	88,210	3,074	50,375	972
North Yorkshire	57,967	1,993	266	123	16,275	30,360	1,218	7,236	496
Nottinghamshire	158,960	7,690	1,167	1,202	40,038	78,287	4,288	25,578	710
South Yorkshire	157,229	4,815	638	943	52,396	71,895	2,322	23,162	1,058
Staffordshire	98,421	5,731	520	414	30,091	44,422	2,220	14,651	372
Suffolk	43,138	2,116	380	117	9,147	22,717	1,790	6,313	558
Surrey	52,504	2,175	377	213	12,815	27,468	2,173	6,837	446
Sussex	111,876	3,269	693	546	26,672	57,910	3,181	18,336	1,269
Thames Valley	200,356	4,702	787	911	40,345	113,307	7,417	31,551	1,336
Warwickshire	45,522	1,461	332	131	12,554	22,839	1,386	6,533	286
West Mercia	82,832	3,298	420	260	17,980	46,377	1,530	12,512	455
West Midlands	330,091	10,980	1,504	5,978	100,002	149,722	9,455	50,613	1,837
West Yorkshire	301,838	9,189	1,465	3,174	94,294	141,422	6,143	43,712	2,439
Wiltshire	41,611	2,621	385	147	9,118	21,420	1,367	6,072	481
Dyfed-Powys	27,743	2,031	361	31	4,632	11,550	788	4,986	364
Gwent	40,008	2,385	313	116	7,091	21,694	1,142	6,815	452
North Wales	48,102	2,857	556	117	11,990	23,287	1,137	7,758	400
South Wales	166,165	6,004	597	483	38,188	78,062	4,254	37,515	1,062
Total	5,530,358	205,416	31,380	58,274	1,369,998	2,753,927	163,132	907,234	40,997

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many incidents of *(a)* theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle and *(b)* theft from a motor vehicle were recorded by each police force in England and Wales in 1993.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is given in the table below.

Notifiable offences of theft of and from a vehicle recorded by the police England and Wales 1993

Police force area	Theft from a vehicle	Theft of a vehicle
Avon and Somerset	36,839	25,399
Bedfordshire	11,480	8,801
Cambridgeshire	11,481	6,939
Cheshire	13,438	9,005
Cleveland	9,229	13,206
Cumbria	8,086	3,150
Derbyshire	16,647	9,421
Devon and Cornwall	23,608	8,349
Dorset	8,937	3,671
Durham	9,401	9,319
Essex	19,848	10,648
Gloucestershire	14,702	4,743
Greater Manchester	54,222	56,135
Hampshire	28,359	9,998
Hertfordshire	12,510	6,001
Humberside	20,141	13,465
Kent	27,005	18,933
Lancashire	23,760	13,149
Leicestershire	17,440	11,749
Lincolnshire	6,626	3,644
City of London	655	142
Merseyside	17,271	16,287
Metropolitan Police District	153,576	77,096
Norfolk	12,850	4,445
Northamptonshire	9,804	7,638
Northumbria	24,571	28,559
North Yorkshire	9,268	5,033
Nottinghamshire	22,250	15,969
South Yorkshire	25,016	22,471
Staffordshire	16,758	10,853
Suffolk	5,993	2,530
Surrey	10,196	4,387
Sussex	20,703	7,664
Thames Valley	43,252	23,128
Warwickshire	8,918	5,153
West Mercia	14,736	8,653
West Midlands	54,741	40,184
West Yorkshire	48,851	38,240
Wiltshire	6,805	2,822
Dyfed-Powys	2,823	1,391
Gwent	6,683	3,737
North Wales	8,481	3,161
South Wales	28,126	23,063
England and Wales	926,086	598,331

Police Statistics

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the *(a)* police establishment and *(b)* the number of supernumerary posts for (i) each police force area including the Metropolitan police and (ii) each part of the Metropolitan police, area divisions or headquarters establishments, for January 1994 and for January in each of the previous five years;

(2) what was the *(a)* police establishment and *(b)* the number of supernumerary posts for (i) each police force area including the Metropolitan police and (ii) each part of the Metropolitan police, area divisions or headquarters establishments, for each month in 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I will write to the hon. Member.

Burglary

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many incidents of *(a)* burglary in a dwelling and *(b)* other burglary were recorded by each police force in England and Wales in 1993.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is given in the table:

Notifiable offences of burglary recorded by the police England and Wales 1993

Police force area	*Burglary in a dwelling*	*Burglary in a building other than a dwelling*
Avon and Somerset	21,454	19,201
Bedfordshire	7,287	8,309
Cambridgeshire	6,845	8,178
Cheshire	10,496	11,538
Cleveland	11,882	6,856
Cumbria	4,536	6,197
Derbyshire	10,083	15,529
Devon and Cornwall	15,837	16,741
Dorset	5,789	3,836
Durham	7,747	5,930
Essex	9,582	17,567
Gloucestershire	8,519	8,775
Greater Manchester	61,240	36,610
Hampshire	15,357	17,709
Hertfordshire	5,224	8,195
Humberside	20,067	27,964
Kent	18,971	11,772
Lancashire	18,725	10,825
Leicestershire	14,175	11,035
Lincolnshire	7,216	5,792
City of London	30	748
Merseyside	21,705	11,983
Metropolitan Police District	114,778	60,406
Norfolk	6,362	11,816
Northamptonshire	7,334	8,610
Northumbria	30,849	32,158
North Yorkshire	7,196	9,079
Nottinghamshire	23,453	16,585
South Yorkshire	25,230	27,166
Staffordshire	13,833	16,258
Suffolk	3,755	5,392
Surrey	5,867	6,948
Sussex	13,403	13,269
Thames Valley	22,061	18,284
Warwickshire	4,520	8,034
West Mercia	8,421	9,559
West Midlands	51,815	48,187
West Yorkshire	58,157	36,137
Wiltshire	4,489	4,629
Dyfed-Powys	1,567	3,065
Gwent	3,315	3,776
North Wales	3,917	8,073
South Wales	14,478	23,710
England and Wales	727,567	642,431

Intimidation of Witnesses

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the incidence of intimidation of witnesses in criminal cases.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 25 April 1994]:* Although attempts are made from time to time to intimidate both potential and actual witnesses in criminal trials, there is no reliable evidence about the extent of this problem. In different ways, both the Government and the police service have taken, and will continue to take, steps to minimise its incidence and effect.

PRIME MINISTER

Labour-controlled Local Authorities

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 18 April, *Official Report,* column *370,* if he will list the district auditor's reports referred to; what were the dates and places of the criminal proceedings referred to; and which councils were involved.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 22 April 1994]:* Criminal proceedings are a matter of public record. Various district auditors' reports, for example, which are publicly available, confirm my earlier answers.

Sir Tim Bell

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Prime Minister how many contracts the Government have awarded since 1987 to Sir Tim Bell for public relations work; and if he will list their nature and value.

The Prime Minister: Information on Government contracts is not held centrally and would involve disproportionate cost to obtain.

The Department of National Heritage let a contract to Lowe Bell Communications on 24 January to help with its programme of civilian events to commemorate the 50th anniversay of the D-day landings. The value of the contract is £50,000 plus a maximum of £12,500 for expenses, net of VAT. The Department has not let any other contracts to Lowe Bell Communications.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 April.

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 April.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

DEFENCE

British Service Men

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current average monthly cost of the British service men on active duty in the former Yugoslavia and the Adriatic.

Mr. Hanley: The additional monthly cost of the United Kingdom's contribution to operations in the former Yugoslavia and the Adriatic is approximately £8,750,000. This includes such things as accommodation—allowances—shipping—carriage of stores—vehicle spares and repair and medical supplies. There are currently some 6,360 United Kingdom personnel deployed on these operations.

Nuclear Test Veterans

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's assessment of the linkage between atomic testing on Christmas Island and reported cases of chronic sickness, including aneurism, among ex-service men involved in the tests.

Mr. Hanley: The recent report published by the National Radiological Protection Board concluded that participation in the nuclear weapon testing programme has not had a detectable effect on the participants expectation of life nor their risk of developing cancer or other fatal diseases. The condition known as aneurism, although potentially fatal, is not accepted as being a radiation-related illness.

Air Training Exercises

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which air forces have carried out air training exercises over Wales during 1993 and 1994; how many sorties have taken place for the last three available years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Military Training

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much was spent in *(a)* 1991, *(b)* 1992 and *(c)* 1993 on providing military training in overseas countries; and if he will list the countries involved.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have been asked to reply.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office expenditure on providing resident and short-term military training assistance in overseas countries was £10·9 million in financial year 1991-92, £9·2 million in 1992-93 and £7·6 million, estimated, in 1993-94. Countries involved are Angola, Antigua, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Chile, Dominica, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Indonesia, Jamaica, Latvia, Lesotho, Malawi, Maldives, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Philippines, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Appointments

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list each appointment for which a Minister has to approve the appointment or shortlist for the appointment, showing for each appointment *(a)* which Minister exercises the responsibility, *(b)* the salary, if any, attached to the post, *(c)* the term of the appointment and *(d)* the person currently appointed to the post.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is responsible for a total of over 850 public appointments. The readily available information about the public appointments for which my right hon. Friend is responsible is published regularly in "Public Bodies". A full list of the public appointments made by this Department has been placed in the Library of the House.

Regulatory Authorities

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what liaison occurs between his Department and regulatory authorities on the making and termination of appointments;

(2) under what circumstances he has the power to veto an appointment made by regulatory authorities.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 April 1994]:* My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is responsible for the appointments of the Director Generals of Electricity, Gas Supply and Telecommunications. The Director Generals are responsible for the appointment of their own staff.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what guidelines are issued to regulatory authorities on how to *(a)* make and *(b)* terminate appointments.

Mr. Eggar: OFFER, Ofgas and Oftel operate under the terms of the civil service management code in relation to staff appointments in the same way as any Government Department.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the occasions on which the National Audit Office has been asked by his Department to look into the circumstances surrounding appointments or dismissals made by a regulatory authority.

Mr. Eggar: The Department has made no such requests to the National Audit Office.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he takes to ensure that there is no conflict of interest in appointments made by regulatory bodies.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for the respective Director Generals.

Construction Industry

Mr. Mullin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he received the report of the construction industry deregulation task force; and when he expects to publish it.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Warley, West (Mr. Spellar) on 30 March 1994, *Official Report,* column 766.

Coal

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many tonnes of coal were imported by the National Coal Board in each year since 1979.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for British Coal.

Insurance

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to introduce a new regulatory body for the insurance industry.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Those matters are kept under periodic review, but I have at present no plans to change the arrangements for regulating the insurance industry.

Debt

Mr. Colvin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he plans to respond to the submissions on his consultative document on the statutory right to interest on late payment of debt.

Mr. McLoughlin: The consultation on measures to address late payment of commercial debt concluded on 31 March 1994. All the responses are currently being considered and a decision will be announced as soon as possible.

Motor Industry Research Unit

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the future of the motor industry research unit.

Mr. Sainsbury: I understand that, following the request of the chief executive and director of the motor industry research unit, an official receiver has been appointed to the company. Its future is therefore in the hands of that receiver.

Privatised Companies

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to remove the limit in shareholding by foreign investors in privatised companies.

Mr. Sainsbury: The question of the shareholding limits for foreign investors in certain privatised companies is under review.

European Funds

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all the schemes under which funds from Europe are available to local authorities.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given to him by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment on 10 March, *Official Report*, column *372*.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which Departments are able to claim European Community funds to undertake redevelopment of urban areas.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Department of the Environment, the Welsh Office, the Scottish Office and the Northern Ireland Office.

Plugs

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will ensure that all electrical appliances are fitted with a plug before sale.

Mr. McLoughlin: The European Commission has sought clarification on a number of points which has delayed the progress of the proposed regulations. I am hopeful that the regulations will be introduced shortly.

Monitoring Committee, Merseyside

Mr. Alton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many members of the objective 1 monitoring committee for Merseyside will be drawn directly from small and medium-sized enterprises in Merseyside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I have been asked to reply.

The monitoring committee will include local partners, including the private sector, on an equitable basis.

ENVIRONMENT

Regional Funding (Merseyside)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what request was made to the Merseyside task force by officials of the European Commission at the recent meeting in respect of the post of head of the objective 1 executive for Merseyside.

Mr. Baldry: Negotiation on various aspects of the Merseyside objective 1 decision document are continuing. However, the regulations deal only with the establishment of the monitoring committee. Arrangements below that are for the member state to determine.

Water Quality

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what procedures are in place to prevent waste water from purification procedures which is discharged into fresh water rivers being used for drinking supplies.

Mr. Atkins: The National Rivers Authority is responsible for setting standards for discharges into rivers, including those from waste water or sewage treatment works. In doing so, the NRA has to have regard to downstream uses of the river, including any cases where water is abstracted for treatment as drinking water.

Special Protection Area Status

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which sites for special protection area and special area of conservation status are currently under consultation with English Nature; and which of the proposals are being objected to.

Mr. Atkins: The following proposed special protection areas are currently under consideration by English Nature, who are consulting relevant owners and occupiers:

Breydon Water
Blackwater Estuary
Debden Estuary
Duddon Estuary
Wealden Heaths

Any unresolved objections to designation will be referred to my Department in due course. The Government and the statutory nature conservation agencies are still in discussion about possible candidate SACs. Public consultation on these will start in due course.

Port Orfod Cedar

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if it is the policy of the Government to support the inclusion of Port Orfod cedar among the species list in appendix II of the convention on international trade in endangered species.

Mr. Atkins: Parties to the convention on international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora will be considering proposals to amend appendices I and II of the convention at the ninth conference of the parties in November this year.

I understand that the United States may submit a proposal to include Port Orford cedar on appendix II. If such a proposal were put forward, we would consider it on its merits in consultation with our scientific advisers at the royal botanic gardens, Kew.

Tenants' Rights Leaflets

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the additional cost of producing leaflets on new rights for council tenants and compulsory competitive tendering of housing management in Welsh, Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, Vietnamese and Greek.

Sir George Young: About £46,000.

Community Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health about the implications of local government reorganisation for the Government's care in the community policies.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend frequently discusses with ministerial colleagues a wide range of issues, including the local government review. In addition, officials in my Department are in regular contact with the Department of Health on matters concerning the review.

Housing Repair

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest figures available for the percentage of work carried out by the building industry on housing repair and maintenance; what percentage of the industry's income is created through this; and how much that amounts to.

Sir George Young: The latest available information shows that housing repair and maintenance output in 1993 was £12,796 million at current prices, which is 28 per cent. of all work undertaken by the construction industry. More details are available in the press notice dated 11 March 1994 entitled "Output and Employment in the Construction Industry: Fourth Quarter 1993" lodged in the House of Commons Library.

Domestic Refuse Collection

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will initiate an inquiry into the extent of, and reasons for, differences in cost of refuse collection for households.

Mr. Curry *[holding answer 25 April 1994]:* The Audit Commission's current study of performance indicators for local authority services covers the costs of refuse collection and disposal per head of population. The commission expects to publish its study results early next year.

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average net cost per domestic refuse collection per household unit for *(a)* the three highest London boroughs, *(b)* the three lowest London boroughs, *(c)* the London borough of Harrow and *(d)* the overall average for all London boroughs.

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average cost per household of collecting domestic refuse; and if he will publish a table showing the average cost per household in the local authority areas of *(a)* Brentwood, *(b)* Brighton, *(c)* Greenwich, *(d)* Hackney, *(e)* Lambeth, *(f)* Southend on Sea, *(g)* Westminster and *(h)* Windsor and Maidenhead.

Mr. Curry *[holding answer 25 April 1994]:* The Department does not collect information in the form requested, although local authorities are required to provide information to the Department on income and expenditure on waste collection as a whole, not broken down by domestic and commercial. Information on the number of households in a local authority area is collected by the Office for Population, Censuses and Surveys.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy collates returns from local authorities on different aspects of waste collection. The results of the survey are published in a CIPFA report "Waste Collection Statistics 1991-92 Actuals".

Hedgerows

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the percentage of hedgerows existing in *(a)* 1978 and *(b)* 1979 that has been lost.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 25 April 1994]:* The only reliable figures we have relate to the period 1984-90. In 1984, our estimated total hedgerow stock in Great Britain was 549,000 km. By 1990, a net loss of around 23 per cent. had been incurred, mainly as a result of neglect.

"Our Common Inheritance"

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the third year report on the "Our Common Inheritance" White Paper will be published.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 25 April 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Woodspring (Dr. Fox) on 20 April 1994, *Official Report*, column 867.

Skypark Planning Application

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he took, under which specific powers, and on what date, in respect of the Skypark planning application after it had been approved by Wrekin district council; and with what result.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 25 April 1994]:* Wrekin district council approved the planning application for the Telford Skypark on 29 July 1992 subject to reference to the Secretary of State for the Environment as a departure under the Town and Country Planning Development Plans (England) Direction 1992. The application was called in for decision on 2 December 1992 under section 77 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and, following a public inquiry, planning permission was refused on 24 February 1994.

Cardiff Bay Barrage

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date he replied to the letter from Mr. Paleokrassas, the Member of the European Commission for the Environment, sent to him on 21 January in relation to the legality issue and the proposal for a barrage at Cardiff bay; if he has received any further communication from Mr. Paleokrasses; and on what date.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 25 April 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 1 March, *Official Report*, column *643*.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the negotiations with the European Union in relation to the provision of alternative wetland habitats for birds displaced from the Cardiff bay site of special scientific interest by the proposed Cardiff bay barrage.

Mr. Atkins: As the hon. Member knows, such negotiations are confidential.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will commission, jointly with the Environment Directorate of the European Commission an independent research study evaluating the socio-economic arguments for the Cardiff bay barrage proposal; and if he will seek an independent assessment of the definition of overwhelming as applied to the socio-economic argument under the habitats directive.

Mr. Atkins: No.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what agreements have been made with the European Commission, consistent with article 6(4) of the habitats directive, regarding measures to be implemented to compensate for the loss of mud-flat habitat at Cardiff bay.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) on 1 March, *Official Report*, column *643*.

Smoke Control Areas

Mr. Thomason: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from industry that regulations to ban the sale of high-sulphur fuels and unauthorised fuels in smoke control areas would result in a significant increase in regulatory burdens and costs.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 25 April 1994]:* I have received a number of such representations from industry and in view of the decline in annual average concentrations and emissions of smoke and sulphur dioxide from domestic sources, further regulations are not proposed at present.

Departmental Spending

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much was spent on *(a)* stationery, *(b)* paper clips and *(c)* staples by his Department in each year since 1979 at current prices.

Mr. Baldry: My Department has spent the following sums on stationery, including paper clips and staples:

Year	*£*
1993-94	668,071
1992-93	555,909
1991-92	431,233
1990-91	[1]1,121,525
1989-90	[1]1,180,690
1988-89	686,825
1987-88	335,326
1986-87	364,076
1985-86	385,291

[1] Combined with printing.

More detailed information is not available, nor are separate figures for expenditure on stationery before 1985-86.

Single Regeneration Budget

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 14 April, *Official Report*, column *239*, if he will list the regional distribution of unallocated funds available under the single regeneration budget.

Mr. Baldry: The regional distribution of unallocated single regeneration budget funds in 1995-96, which will support new bids, will not be known until the bidding round has been completed and the successful schemes are announced. The timetable is set out in the bidding guidance published by my Department on 14 April. Copies of the guidance have been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many of the regional directors of the single regeneration budget are black people or Asian.

Mr. Baldry: None.

Migratory Birds

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what effect he expects the proposed amendment to article 7 of directive 79/409/EEC to have on the protection of migratory birds in mainland Europe, particularly France.

Mr. Atkins: The proposed amendment clarifies the arrangements for protecting migratory birds and avoids unnecessary interference with traditional hunting seasons

in some member states. In France, the amendment would not mean that migratory birds were more at risk than in earlier years. The dates for the close of the hunting seasons would, in future, be fixed in accordance with the criteria specified in the proposed amendment to the directive.

Archives

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the archive services and the reorganisation of local government.

Mr. Baldry: This year my right hon. Friend has received some 50 written representations from organisations and individuals who wish to see the existing level of local authority archive services maintained following reorganisation. My hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) met the chairman and secretary of the Royal Commission for Historical Manuscripts on 24 February.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what statutory safeguards he proposes to introduce to ensure that archive services are not adversely affected by the reorganisation of local government.

Mr. Baldry: The Local Government Commission's recommendations must enable adequate provision to be made for all existing local government functions, including archives. Collaborative arrangements between unitary authorities may be desirable in some cases. The Government's preference is for such arrangements to be on a voluntary basis, but section 21 of the Local Government Act 1992 gives my right hon. Friend powers to establish a joint authority for any local government function if he considers that satisfactory voluntary arrangements have not been made or have broken down.

Mobile Phones and Pagers

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list each individual in his Department who is provided with a mobile phone or pager, their position in the Department and the cost to the public funds of this provision.

Mr. Baldry: The mobile phones and pagers used within my Department are allocated to business units and not specifically to individual officers. There are 154 mobile phones currently in use. Their book value is estimated as £35,000 and the line rental costs are some £49,000 per annum. Some 428 pagers are rented at a cost of £20,000 per annum.

Lower Severn Estuary

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has had with the Countryside Council for Wales and English Nature in relation to the *(a)* registration and *(b)* plan for management of the lower Severn estuary draft special protection area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Consultations and discussions with both bodies are continuing.

European Structural Fund

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will present to the European Commission the Government's proposals for directing future European structural fund assistance towards the economic development of rural areas in England; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I have arranged for the regional conversion plans for the six regions in England designated by the Commission for assistance under structural funds objective 5b to be presented to the European Commission today. Funding under objective 5b contributes towards the development and structural readjustment of rural areas. The plans cover the period 1994-99, for which £381 million has been allocated to England.

The six regions, with 1994-99 allocations, are East Anglia, £46 million—south west, £170 million—northern uplands, £84 million—the marches, £31 million—Lincolnshire, £41 million—and midlands uplands—Derbyshire/Staffordshire, £9 million. The plans have been lodged in time to ensure that the eligible date for expenditure on objective 5b programmes is 1 January 1994. Under the structural funds regulations, the Commission is required to reach a decision on the plans within six months of receipt.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Aid Expenditure

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much he intends to spend on each of *(a)* bilateral aid and *(b)* multilateral aid for each of the financial years 1994-95, 1995-96, 1996-97 and 1997-98.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Current planning figures for expenditure are as follows. Figures for 1997-98 are not available as these are beyond the current public expenditure survey period.

£ million

	1994-95	*1995-96*	*1996-97*
Bilateral expenditure	1,189	1,097	1,020
Multilateral expenditure	1,073	1,115	1,142

These planning figures include an allowance, additional to the overall figure agreed in the public expenditure survey, to compensate for expected slippage of expenditure. For this reason, and because of the many detailed changes that take place over a period at country and programme level in the rate of spending, actual spending will vary from the figures shown.

Multilateral Agencies (Aid)

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much of the multilateral aid budget he intends to allocate to each of *(a)* the European bank for reconstruction and development, *(b)* the European Union, *(c)* the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations and *(d)* the World bank for each of the financial years 1994-95, 1995-96, 1996-97, 1997-98.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Current planning figures for expenditure is given below. Estimates for 1997-98 are not available as this is beyond the current public expenditure survey period.

£ million

	1994-95	*1995-96*	*1996-97*
European Bank for Reconstruction and Development	40	40	40
European Community	569	696	745
World Bank/IMF	315	232	204

In some cases actual spending may vary from those figures because of factors such as exchange rate movements and changes in the rate of expenditure of the multilateral institutions concerned.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation sets a biennial programme of work and budget of which the United Kingdom contribution is based on the United Nations scale of assessments. The United Kingdom contribution in 1994 is £12·1 million. The 1995 contribution will be similar.

Bilateral Aid

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what part of the bilateral aid budget will be allocated to each of *(a)* Africa, *(b)* Asia, South, *(c)* Asia, south-east, *(d)* Latin America/Caribbean/Atlantic and *(e)* central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union for each of the financial years 1994-95, 1995-96, 1996-97 and 1997-98.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Current planning figures for bilateral country programmes are as follows. Figures for 1997-98 are not available as these are beyond the current public expenditure survey period.

£ million

	1994-95	*1995-96*	*1996-97*
Africa	344	315	284
Asia/Pacific	248	227	217
Eastern Europe/FSU	78	79	75
Western Hemisphere	88	79	72

These planning figures include an allowance, additional to the overall figure agreed in the public expenditure survey, to compensate for expected slippage of expenditure. For this reason, and because of the many detailed changes that take place over a period at country level in the rate of spending, actual spending will vary from the figures shown.

Mozambique

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made with the resettlement of refugees in Mozambique.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is co-ordinating the repatriation and resettlement programme for some 1·5 million Mozambican refugees from the six neighbouring countries of asylum. We have contributed £4·5 million to this programme. Latest reports are that over 700,000 have returned with a further 500,000 expected to be resettled before the October elections.

EMPLOYMENT

Older Trainees

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of trainees *(a)* between the ages of 30 and 40 years and *(b)* between the ages of 40 and 50 years find work on completion of a training course.

Miss Widdecombe: In 1992-93, of those 30 to 40-year-olds who completed their agreed course of training on employment training, 38 per cent. went on to find work. The corresponding figure for 40 to 50-year-olds was 40 per cent.

Unemployed Graduates

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list by travel-to-work area the numbers of unemployed *(a)* men and *(b)* women who graduated in (i) 1992 and (ii) 1993.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is not available.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many students who graduated in *(a)* 1992 and *(b)* 1993 are currently registered as unemployed.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is not available in the form requested. Estimates from the labour force survey for Great Britain show that there were 46,000 International Labour Organisation unemployed people aged under 25 educated to degree level or higher in autumn 1993; the equivalent figure for autumn 1992 was 47,000.

Training Schemes

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people of all ages are on training schemes in *(a)* each of the London boroughs and *(b)* England.

Miss Widdecombe: Information is not available centrally for individual London boroughs. Information by training and enterprise council area and for London and England is given in the following table:

Number of participants in January 1994

TEC	*Youth Training*[1]	*Training for Work*
Aztec	1,300	1,290
Central London	1,980	2,430
Cilntec	2,250	2,100
East London	4,430	3,600
North London	1,140	2,540
North West London	970	1,650
Solotec	2,320	1,460
South Thames	2,980	4,660
West London	2,430	1,330
London Region	19,800	21,000
England	244,800	125,800

Source: TEC Operating Agreement.
[1] Youth Training includes Youth Credits.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list *(a)* the numbers of individuals petitioning and *(b)* the number of cases heard by the industrial tribunals for each of the last 10 years.

Miss Widdecombe: The figures are as follows:

	Applications registered	*Cases heard*
1984-85	39,191	[1]9,690
1985-86	38,593	13,357
1986-87	38,385	13,124
1987-88	30,543	10,464
1988-89	29,304	9,023
1989-90	34,697	10,229
1990-91	43,243	11,430
1991-92	67,448	13,778
1992-93	71,821	17,836
1993-94	71,661	n/a

[1] Figure for January 1984 to March 1985.

Some two thirds of all applications do not come to hearing, being either withdrawn or settled by the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service in conciliation. I regret that figures are not yet available for the numbers of cases heard in the year 1993-94.

Unemployment, Tooting

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women living in the Tooting parliamentary constituency who were in receipt of unemployment benefit and who have been unemployed for (i) longer than six months, (ii) longer than 12 months, (iii) longer than two years and (iv) three years and over as of the last most convenient date for which figures can be given.

Miss Widdecombe: The unadjusted figures for the number of people claiming unemployment related benefits in January 1994 are given in the table:

Duration of claim	*Male*	*Female*
Over six months	3,116	933
Over twelve months	2,160	562
Over two years	1,143	256
Over three years	547	106

Claimant unemployment information by duration is available quarterly from the NOMIS database in the Library for the months of January, April, July and October and only on the unadjusted basis.

Labour Statistics, Wandsworth

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of job vacancies at jobcentres covering the London borough of Wandsworth at the last most convenient date for which figures can be given.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is given in the following table:

Unfilled Vacancies (not seasonally adjusted) in Jobcentres covering the Borough of Wandsworth (March 1994)

Jobcentre	*Number of Vacancies*
Battersea	11
Clapham Junction	99
Balham	[1]—
Putney	53
Tooting	176

[1] Not all jobcentres record their own vacancies. Vacancies dealt with by Balham are included under figures for other jobcentres in the borough.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of job vacancies for young people under the age of 21 years in the London borough of Wandsworth as of 14 April.

Miss Widdecombe: The number of jobcentre vacancies specifically for young people are not available from the monthly vacancy count. Vacancy figures for 8 April will be available from 9.30 am Wednesday 18 May. On 4 March the total number of unfilled vacancies at jobcentres in the London borough of Wandsworth was 339.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the level of youth unemployment in the London borough of Wandsworth at 14 April.

Miss Widdecombe: Statistics from the 14 April claimant unemployment count will be available from 9.30 am on Wednesday 18 May and will include a quarterly analysis of claimant unemployment by age.

In January 1994, the most recent figure available, the number of unemployed claimants under 25 years of age was 4,310 in the Wandsworth local authority district.

Work Permits

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of work permits given to foreign nationals to work in the United Kingdom in 1993.

Miss Widdecombe: The total number of work permits issued for overseas nationals to work in Great Britain during 1993 was 37,761.

Earnings, Scotland

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table setting out the numbers of wage and salary earners in Scotland in the income bands *(a)* over £100,000, *(b)* between £50,000 and £100,000, *(c)* between £25,000 and £50,000, *(d)* between £10,000 and £25,000, *(e)* between £5,000 and £10,000 and *(f)* less than £5,000 or such other bands as his Department has available covering the same breadth of income.

Mr. Stewart: I have been asked to reply.

The table, derived from the new earnings survey, shows average gross weekly earnings of full-time employees in Scotland on all rates of pay, whose pay was unaffected by absence. The survey data relate to April 1993; the approximate equivalent annual pay bands are also shown in the table. The figures are for full-time employees only as many part-time employees are excluded from the sample. However, it is estimated that approximately two thirds of part-time employees earn below £100 per week.

Pay ranges of full-time employees in Scotland; April 1993

Gross weekly pay range	*Approximate equivalent annual pay range*	*Percentage of full-time employees in pay range (per cent.)*	*Estimated[1] number of full-time employees in pay range*
£1,923 or more	£100,000 or more	—	—
£962—£1,923	£50,000—£100,000	0·7	10,100
£481—£962	£25,000—£50,000	9·1	130,800
£192—£481	£10,000—£25,000	62·3	895,400
£96—£192	£5,000—£10,000	26·2	376,500
less than £96	less than £5,000	1·6	23,000

[1] Derived by multiplying New Earnings Survey data on percentages in each pay range by estimated numbers of full-time employees in employment at March 1993.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of average male earnings is earned by *(a)* women manual workers and *(b)* women non-manual workers in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: I have been asked to reply.

Information from the new earnings survey, at April 1993, shows that the average weekly earnings of full-time non-manual women is equivalent to 65 per cent. of the average for non-manual men. The average weekly earnings of full-time manual women is equivalent to 64 per cent. of the average for manual men. These estimates are based on average gross weekly earnings of all full-time employees on adult rates in Scotland whose pay was unaffected by absence—source: Employment Department.

Employees, Scotland

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employees in Scotland are in the service sector; and what percentage this forms of the total work force.

Mr. Stewart: I have been asked to reply.

For December 1993, the latest date for which information is available, it is estimated that 1,436,900 employees in employment in Scotland worked in the service sector. This represents 73 per cent. of all employees in employment.

EDUCATION

Pupil Statistics

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish for each year since 1987 the number in England of *(a)* pupils in assisted places schemes in secondary schools, *(b)* pupils in secondary schools in total and *(c)* the number in *(a)* as a percentage of *(b)*.

Mr. Forth: The assisted places scheme is run at 295 independent schools in England. The number of pupils holding assisted places and the total number of pupils of secondary school age in all schools is given in the following table:

Academic Year	*(a) Number of pupils holding assisted places*	*(b) Total number of pupils in secondary schools[1]*	*(c) (a) as a percentage of (b)*
1987-88	26,899	3,335,194	·81
1988-89	27,083	3,205,617	·84
1989-90	27,008	3,114,602	·87
1990-91	26,740	3,108,159	·86
1991-92	27,641	3,161,692	·87
1992-93	28,674	3,224,611	·89

[1] Includes middle deemed secondary schools, self-governing (GM) schools, special schools, CTCs and independent schools.

Ministerial Visits

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which constituencies he has visited in his capacity as Secretary of State in the last six months; and for what purpose those visits were made.

Mr. Patten: The details requested are as follows:

Constituency	*Date*	*Purpose of visit*
Blackpool, South	8 October 1993	Visit to Roseacre and Hawes Side Primary Schools
Milton Keynes, North-East	13 October 1993	Officially open the new BT Training Centre in Milton Keynes and visit to the Open University
Harrogate	16 November 1993	Speak at the CBI Conference in Harrogate
Stratford-upon-Avon	25 November 1993	Speak at the Girls' Schools Association Conference in Stratford-upon-Avon
Daventry	26 November 1993	Present prizes at Sponne School Prize Giving in Towcester, Northamptonshire
Oxford, West and Abingdon	5 January 1994	Speak at the Oxford Teachers' Conference at St. Catherine's College, Oxford
City of Chester	7 January 1994	Speak at the North of England Annual Education Conference in Chester
Bristol, North-West	28 January 1994	Visit to Pen Park School and Filton FE College
Derbyshire, West	9 February 1994	Visit to Ecclesbourne Grant-Maintained School
Derby, North	9 February 1994	Visit to Landau Forte CTC
Wirral, West	11 February 1994	Visit to Plessington Catholic High School, The Wirral
Bournemouth, West	18 March 1994	Speak at the Secondary Heads Association Conference
Birmingham, Ladywood	21 March 1994	Speak at the Grant-Maintained Schools Centre's Annual Conference
Erith and Crayford	22 March 1994	Visit to Bexley and Erith Technical High School for Boys
Newcastle-under-Lyme	12 April 1994	Speak at the Higher Education Funding Council for England's Conference
Croydon, South	19 April 1994	Visit to School Curriculum and Assessment Authority's Residential Meeting in Sanderstead

Higher Education Quality Council

Mr. Bryan Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what information he has on the costs of quality audit procedures conducted by the Higher Education Quality Council;

(2) what information he has on the running costs of the Higher Education Quality Council.

Mr. Boswell: The Higher Education Quality Council is a body wholly independent of Government, set up by the universities and colleges and funded by them. I understand that the council's annual expenditure is currently of the

order of £3·2 million, excluding some self-financing activities. Within this, expenditure on quality audit is of the order of £1·5 million.

Teachers' Pension Agency

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what key performance targets he has set for the Teachers' Pension Agency in 1994-95.

Mr. Forth: For 1994-95, the key performance targets for the Teachers' Pension Agency are:

a. to achieve an improvement in efficiency of 5 per cent. in the use of running costs resources within the Agency's control;
b. to process 96 per cent. of the applications for retirement awards by the payable date, or if later, then within 30 days of receipt of the application;
c. to meet agreed accuracy targets for pensions-related calculations;
d. to provide a substantive answer to 95 per cent. of written enquiries within 15 working days of their receipt;
e. to manage the programme agreed with the Agency's clients for the collection and processing of service and salary data relating to teachers and to seek timely submission of that data.

Annual Capital Guidelines

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what estimates there are of the cost of additional demands placed on annual capital guidelines for local education authorities since the introduction of the national curriculum; what plans there are to alleviate this extra demand; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: It is for LEAs and schools to make the best use of the resources available so that schools are equipped to deliver the national curriculum effectively. The substantial capital sums made available by Government in recent years will help them to do so, in particular the 33 per cent. real terms increase in total capital support in the five years to 1993-94.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many representations he has received from local education authorities regarding their ACGs for 1994-95.

Mr. Forth: Twenty-one.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many representations he has received from local education authorities regarding their provisional indicators for ACG for the year 1995-96; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Three.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what provisions are made in allocating ACG for basic needs provision; what account is taken of the age of educational establishments and consequent renovation and repairs needed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Cover for basic need in annual capital guidelines is provided through cost-multipliers for each place assessed as required. Such an assessment compares projected demand with the number of local places. Although the age of buildings is not a factor in considering basic need bids, where a surveyor's report indicates that the condition of a building is such that replacement is urgently needed and is cheaper than repair cover will be provided within ACGs in the exceptional basic need category.

Educational Establishments, Lancashire

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many educational establishments in Lancashire date back to the 19th century; how many were built pre-1960s; and how many were built in the 1960s and 70s.

Mr. Forth: This information is not held centrally.

Temporary Classrooms

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the latest figures available for primary and secondary schools with temporary classrooms and HORSA—hutting operation for raising of school leaving age—buildings in each local education authority; how many have had these for five years or more; what percentage of teaching space these comprise; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is not held centrally.

Unemployed Graduates

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list by *(a)* university of graduation and *(b)* subject of graduation the number of (i) men and (ii) women who graduated in (1) 1992 and (2) 1993 who are currently registered as unemployed.

Mr. Boswell: The information requested is not available centrally. Tables 9 and 9a of "University Management Statistics and Performance Indicators in the UK" published by the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals—a copy of the 1993 edition has been placed in the Library—show the proportion of first-degree graduates from the former Universities Funding Council—funded institutions whose destination on leaving was reported as unemployed or short-term employment, and the proportion from each institution adjusted for the national distributions of graduate subject mix.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Somalia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will press for the public release by the United Nations of the full independent investigation chaired by the Chief Justice of Zambia into the conduct of the United Nations operation in Somalia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Members of the Security Council are now studying the contents of the report and a decision on its public release is expected shortly. We do not oppose its release but recognise that Security Council members who contributed troops to the operation need time to consider the report carefully before reaching a decision.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Somalia peace meeting scheduled for Mogadishu on 15 April between General Aideed, Ali Mahdi and others took place; and if he will make a statement on the prospects for further such meetings.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We understand that the meeting of the 15 factions scheduled for 15 April in Mogadishu has

now been postponed until 25 April. A national reconciliation conference is due to take place on 15 May to elect a President, Vice-Presidents and a Prime Minister. We continue to support all efforts by the Somalis to take forward the political reconciliation process.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about current military activity in Somalia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have received reports of recent fighting between Somalia clans in Merca, south of Mogadishu. Reports also indicate that in the last few days there have been serious clashes between the Habr Gedr and Hawadle sub-clans in Mogadishu.

Mozambique

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the strength and national background of the ONUMOZ—the United Nations Operation in Mozambique—force in Mozambique.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: At 31 March 1994, ONUMOZ had a strength of 6,108 troops, 370 military observers and 274 civilian policemen. The force was made up of the following contingents:

Argentina
40 troops
8 UNMOs

Australia
16 civpol

Bangladesh
25 civpol
1,459 troops
30 UNMOs

Botswana
767 troops
13 UNMOs

Brazil
35 civpol
27 UNMOs

Canada
15 UNMOs

Cape Verde
18 UNMOs

China
10 UNMOs

Czech Republic
19 UNMOs

Egypt
21 civpol
20 UNMOs

Guinea Bissau
25 civpol
43 UNMOs

Russian Federation
19 UNMOs

Spain
14 civpol
20 UNMOs

Hungary
10 civpol
23 UNMOs

India
916 troops
18 UNMOs

Ireland
20 civpol

Italy
971 troops

Japan
53 troops

Jordan
45 civpol

Malaysia
35 civpol
24 UNMOs

Netherlands
11 troops

New Zealand
2 troops

Norway
10 civpol

Portugal
7 civpol
277 troops
1 UNMO

Sweden
10 civpol
20 UNMOs

Switzerland
1 civpol

United States
5 troops

Uruguay
842 troops
34 UNMOs

Zambia
865 troops
8 UNMOs

[1] Italian troop contribution is currently being wound down, as the deployment of an additional 1,144 Civpol (all nations) authorised in SCR 898 gets underway.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current timetable for elections in Mozambique; what are the major obstacles to be overcome; and what assistance the British Government and the European Union are giving to the successful implementation of these elections.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The elections are scheduled to take place from 27 to 28 October 1994. Major obstacles to be overcome include: the completion of the assembly and demobilisation of Government and RENAMO forces; the establishment of a new unified army—FADM; the translation of RENAMO into a political party; and the registration of the new electorate. A British Army training team is in Mozambique to assist the training of the FADM. Under our aid programme, we are contributing £600,000 to the United Nations Development Programme project to provide technical assistance to the electoral authorities and £500,000 to the United Nations trust fund for the implementation of the peace process. We are paying our share of the costs of maintaining ONUMOZ in Mozambique. The EU has pledged nearly $13 million for electoral assistance.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made with disarmament and demobilisation in Mozambique.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Of the force totals notified to the UN, over 55 per cent. of Government and 80 per cent. of RENAMO soldiers are in the UN monitored assembly areas where they have handed in their weapons. Over 10,000 troops have either been demobilised or earmarked to join the new unified Mozambican army.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 12 April, *Official Report*, column *17*, which countries apart from the United Kingdom, France, China and the Russian Federation are thought to have mastered the technology to become nuclear weapon states; and which other states are thought to be pursuing that technological expertise.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to the honourable Member for Clydebank and Milngavie on 12 April, *Official Report*, column *17*.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which nations other than North Korea have had their nuclear capabilities inspected in the past five years by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: More than 110 states have concluded safeguards agreements with the IAEA. Such agreements provide for regular inspection of a state's particular nuclear facilities.

Belize

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 18 April, *Official Report*, column *375*, what reason was given by the Presidency for the exclusion of Belize from the San José meeting.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Presidency explained that Belize did not attend San José X because central American delegations to the meeting could not agree to the presence of Belize as an official observer.

UN Organisations

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he takes to monitor the performance of specialist UN organisations in emergency situations; and what access hon. Members have to the content of those reports.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We monitor the performance of the UN specialised agencies involved in emergency situations through representation on their governing bodies—including frequent evaluation of specific projects and overall programmes—attendance at briefing meetings and contacts with UN officials at headquarters and in the field. The availability of UN agencies' evaluations of their own performance in specific emergencies is a matter for the agencies concerned.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on implementation of the code of public access to proceedings of the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have strongly supported moves to increase openness in the Community. The code of conduct on access to information held by the Council and Commission came into effect at the beginning of the year, and provides for the widest possible access, subject to certain safeguards.

Sweden

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the compatibility of the declaration attached to Sweden's treaty of accession to open government and the policy of the Council of Ministers on access by newspapers to minutes and documents relating to meetings in Brussels.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Sweden made a declaration in the Final Act attached to the accession treaty welcoming the development now taking place in the European Union towards greater openness and transparency. The declaration noted that open government is a fundamental part of Sweden's constitutional, political and cultural heritage. The Union made a declaration in response adding that the member states of the European Union take it for granted that as a member, Sweden will fully comply with Community law in this respect.

Cyprus

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the size of the United Nations peacekeeping force in Cyprus on 20 April; and what nationalities were represented.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The latest figures available from the United Nations give the strength of UNFICYP on 31 March 1994 as 1,194 troops, 12 military observers and 36 civilian policemen. The force was made up of the following contingents:

Argentina
375 troops

Australia
20 civpol

Austria
360 troops
4 UNMOs

Canada
10 troops

Denmark
1 soldier

Finland
1 soldier

Hungary
4 UNMOs

Ireland
16 civpol
26 troops
4 UNMOs

United Kingdom
421 troops

Landmines

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action is being taken by Her Majesty's Government to secure the implementation of protocol 2 on the prohibition of the use of landmines.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom already adheres strictly to the terms of the 1981 United Nations weaponry convention, of which the second protocol covers prohibitions on the use of mines.

We are taking an active part in the work of the preparatory meetings leading to the review conference of the convention in 1995. One of our principal objectives in this exercise is to secure the wider implementation of the convention by encouraging more states to accede to it.

Western European Union

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many members of the British embassy to NATO and the WEU have so far visited the WEU planning cell in Brussels.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There are regular and extensive contacts involving all members of the United Kingdom delegations to NATO and WEU and members of the WEU planning cell. Such contacts have occurred at WEU headquarters in Brussels, which houses both the WEU secretariat and the planning cell, and at the United Kingdom delegation and elsewhere.

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to make available in single document form the treaty of Rome as amended by the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The consolidated text of the treaty establishing the EC, as amended by the treaty on European Union, has already been published by the office for official publications of the European Communities. It is available in the Library of the House and through HMSO.

European Commission

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out his objectives with regard to changing the powers of the European Commission.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The United Kingdom favours a more efficient and accountable Commission committed to the overall goals set by successive European Councils. We welcome the fall in the volume of proposed legislation and the Commission's commitment to implement subsidiarity.

Mr. Van den Broek

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, further to his answer of 28 March, *Official Report*, column *548*, if he will ask Mr. Van den Broek to make it clear when he is expressing his personal opinions and when he is expressing official opinions in areas in which he has responsibility and competence.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No.

Aid Agencies

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he has initiated to safeguard the locally recruited staff of British aid agencies in Rwanda and Burundi.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Nations mission in Rwanda—UNAMIR—is working for a ceasefire. It has also been tasked by the Security Council to assist in the resumption of humanitarian relief operations and monitor and report on developments. In Burundi the OAU has a vital role to play in restoring confidence within the country. We have given support to all international and regional efforts to halt the inter-ethnic disputes in both countries.

Angola

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the crash of two Red Cross planes in Angola on 17 April.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have no information on the alleged incident.

Rwanda

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the outcome of the United Nations Security Council meeting to discuss the future of the United Nations Mission in Rwanda.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: On 21 April the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 912. This authorises a reduction in the size of UNAMIR and gives it a mandate to act as an intermediary in an attempt to secure a ceasefire as well as assist in the resumption of humanitarian relief operations and monitor and report on developments.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Agency

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in how many cases where a maintenance assessment has been completed by the Child Support Agency the parent with care was in receipt of family credit, at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Donald Dewar, dated 26 April 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the number of cases in which a child maintenance assessment has been completed where the parent with care was in receipt of family credit.

The Agency does not collect information that identifies maintenance assessments according to the benefit status of the parent with care. At 28 February 1994, however, 26 per cent. of the maintenance application forms issued involved parents with in care who had claimed family credit.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the average interval between the reception and issue of a substantive response to letters sent to the chief executive of the Child Support Agency from hon. Members dated *(a)* November 1993, *(b)* December 1993 and *(c)* January 1994.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Ms Joyce Quin, dated 26 April 1994.

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the average interval between the receipt of, and response to, letters sent to me by Members of Parliament.

I am sorry but the information is not available in the form you request. The first year of the Agency's operations has stimulated a great deal of correspondence, and I have received over 5,000 letters from Members of Parliament. All such letters are acknowledged within 24 hours of receipt and by 15 April I had personally replied to over 3,000. Set out in the table below are the average clearance times between 1 November 1993 and 31 January 1994 for such correspondence:

Cleared 1-15 days per cent.	*Cleared 16-20 days per cent.*	*Cleared 21 to 40 days per cent.*	*Cleared over 40 days per cent.*
10·52	5·21	36·35	47·92

I am afraid that the targets for answering letters are not currently being met, but necessary steps have been taken to ensure that letters from Members are answered as promptly as possible.

I am sorry that I cannot be more helpful, but I would like to assure you that the Agency is determined to improve its performance in this regard.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what provisions exist for the Child Support Agency to pay compensation; what criteria apply to compensation payments; and how many compensation payments, of what value, have been made to date.

Mr. Burt: The Department of Social Security operates non-statutory special payment arrangements under which compensation may be considered where, as a result of clear and unambiguous departmental error or unreasonable delay, actual financial loss has been suffered. Requests for special payments will be considered within these broad guidelines, taking account of the particular circumstances of each individual case. Two ex-gratia payments have been made by the agency to date, one of £100—relating to liable relative work before the inception of the agency—and one for £115·60.

Housing Benefit

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in Scotland are on housing benefit; and what is the total annual cost.

Mr. Hague: At the end of November 1993 there were approximately 550,000 live claims to housing benefit in Scotland. The estimated total annual cost for 1993-94 was £706 million.

Data Sources: The Housing Benefit Management Information System quarterly caseload count November 1993 and the 1994 Departmental Report.

Notes:
Caseload
1. The figures are for benefit units, which may be a couple or a single person, and have been rounded to the nearest one thousand. Estimates for non-responding local authorities are included.
2. The information is recorded at one particular point and does not take account of claims which start and end between the quarterly reporting periods.

War Disablement Pension

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many appeals are waiting to be heard for war disablement pension; and in how many such cases the appeal was lodged before 1 May 1993.

Mr. Hague: This is a matter for Mr. Peter Mathison, the chief executive of the War Pensions Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Peter Mathison to Mr. Jim Cousins, dated 22 April 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the number of War Pensions appeals awaiting hearing.

On 20 April 1994 there was 4,474 appeals waiting to be heard for War Disablement Pension. Of these 4,343 were lodged with the War Pensions Agency before 1 May 1993.

I hope you find my reply helpful.

Claimants, London

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total number of claimant families in each of the London boroughs in *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94.

Mr. Burt: The information cannot be provided in the precise form requested. Information on claims by families with dependent children is available only for family credit and for London Benefits Agency office areas. Details are in the table.

Further information on the numbers of individuals claiming social security benefits for Great Britain as a whole can be found in the Social Security departmental report, Cm 2513, a copy of which is in the Library.

London offices of the Benefits Agency—family credit claims at a given time

	November 1992	November 1993	March 1994
Acton	103	324	281
Balham	487	391	443
Battersea	530	345	373
Bloomsbury	118	90	90
Brixton	535	728	736
Camberwell	46	21	19
Canning Town	225	273	262
Chelsea	120	71	76
Cricklewood	91	181	166
Crystal Palace	286	491	495
Ealing	435	744	725
Edmonton	943	1,194	1,225
Eltham	44	32	24
Euston	139	133	117
Finsbury Park	157	353	322
Greenwich Park	345	407	402
Hackney	530	788	798
Harlesden	200	360	351
Hendon	484	623	632
Highgate	224	388	339
Hither Green	16	2	2
Hoxton	382	497	519
Kennington Park	351	404	420
Kensington	103	61	56
Lewisham	268	553	561
Leytonstone	919	1,267	1,355
Neasden	421	513	519
Notting Hill	85	105	97
Oval	35	14	17
Paddington	276	208	181
Peckham	598	848	828
Plaistow	594	758	812
Poplar	687	861	889
Shoreditch	358	302	353
Southwark	472	573	589
Stepney	1,130	1,241	1,194
Stoke Newington	770	1,020	1,009
Streatham	288	432	452
Thames North	3	3	4
Tottenham	545	722	749
Walthamstow	632	808	844
Wandsworth	387	472	462
Westminster	474	383	386
Wimbledon	472	585	519
Wood Green	418	497	512
Woodgrange Park	868	1,197	1,203
Woolwich	841	1,101	1,104

Income Support

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the number of families in Scotland living on income support.

Mr. Burt: The number is 146,000.

Notes
1. Sources: Income Support Statistics Quarterly Enquiry, May 1993.
2. The figure has been rounded to the nearest thousand.
3. A "family" is defined as an Income Support recipient with one or more dependants under 19 years of age.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many recipients of income support were in (i) residential and (ii) nursing homes in May 1991, May 1992 and May 1993.

Mr. Burt: The information for Great Britain is in the table:

	Residential Care People receiving Income Support (thousands)	*Nursing Homes People receiving Income Support (thousands)*
May 1991	139	94
May 1992	152	116
May 1993	159	124

Note:
All data rounded to nearest thousand.
Source: Income Support Statistics Annual Enquiries 1991 and 1992. Income Support Statistics Quarterly Enquiry 1993.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the cash limit values of each category of income support in residential and nursing care in each year since 1990; and what percentage they represent in real terms of the limit values in April 1985.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the table.

	April 1990		*August 1990*		*April 1991*		*April 1992*		*April 1993*		*April 1994*[1]
	Cash £ per week	*Per cent. of 1985 real value*	*Cash £ per week*	*Per cent. of 1985 real value*	*Cash £ per week*	*Per cent. of 1985 real value*	*Cash £ per week*	*Per cent. of 1985 real value*	*Cash £ per week*	*Per cent. of 1985 real value*	*Cash £ per week*
RESIDENTIAL CARE HOMES											
Elderly	150	103	155	104	160	104	175	109	185	113	194
Very dependent elderly[2]	165	114	170	114	185	120	205	127	215	132	224
Mentally ill	150	95	155	96	170	101	185	105	195	110	202
Drug/alcohol dependent	150	95	155	96	170	101	185	105	195	110	202
Mentally handicapped	175	95	180	95	195	99	215	105	225	108	232
Physically disabled under pension age	210	94	215	94	230	96	245	98	255	101	262
Others	150	103	155	104	160	104	175	109	185	113	194
NURSING HOMES											
Elderly and others	200	109	210	112	255	131	270	133	280	136	290
Mentally ill	200	102	210	105	255	122	270	124	280	127	290
Drug/alcohol dependent	200	102	210	105	255	122	270	124	280	127	290
Mentally handicapped	215	97	225	99	260	110	275	111	285	114	295
Physically disabled under pension age	245	93	255	95	290	104	305	105	315	107	325
Terminally ill	245	93	260	97	275	99	280	96	280	95	290
GREATER LONDON EXTENSION		[3]		[3]		[3]		[3]		[3]	
Residential care homes	23	102	23	100	23	96	25	100	25	99	30
Nursing homes	23	102	23	100	33	138	35	141	35	139	35

Notes:
[1] Real value comparisons with April 1985 limits are based on the all-items RPI in the month in which the uprating occurred.
[2] The higher limit for the very dependent elderly was not introduced until July 1986. Comparisons are with the limit for the elderly in April 1985, which would have applied to these claimants.
[3] Additions for claimants in Greater London were not introduced until July 1986. Comparisons are therefore with the July 1986 real values, not April 1985.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants had unemployment benefit disallowed due to non-availability for work in each year since 1979; and if he will provide a breakdown on these figures identifying the numbers whose unemployment benefit was disallowed *(a)* due to premature termination of training, *(b)* for the refusal of suitable employment and *(c)* because they voluntarily made themselves redundant.

Mr. Burt: The information is available only from 1984 and not in the form requested. Numbers of disallowances on grounds of non-availability are shown in the tables together with the numbers of disqualifications under *(a)*, *(b)* and *(c)*.

Totals of adjudication officers opinions[1] and decisions and numbers of disallowances on cases of availability

	Availability	
	All decisions	*Disallowances*
1984	83,112	46,439
1985	92,628	52,825
1986	120,043	67,127
1987	179,213	91,181
1988	163,899	86,806
1989	96,153	53,237
1990	57,811	33,499
Quarter March 1991[2]	10,848	6,165
Year ending March 1992	86,336	50,183
Year ending March 1993	87,328	49,463
Half-year September 1993	36,459	23,241
Quarter-year December 1993	24,565	15,217

[1] Opinions on availability are given by Adjudication Officers in the Employment Service on claims for Income Support.
[2] At the end of 1990 statistics ceased to be collected by calendar year and changed to a financial year, the quarter ending March 1991 is therefore shown as a separate quarter.

Totals of adjudication officers opinions and decisions and numbers of disqualifications on cases of refusal of employment, leaving employment voluntarily and premature termination of training

	Refusal of employment		Leaving voluntarily		Premature termination of training[1]	
	All decisions	Disqualification	All decisions	Disqualification	All decisions	Disqualification
1984	6,021	1,150	480,679	288,120	38,341	25,591
1985	6,128	2,039	499,084	306,588	42,428	29,389
1986	7,795	2,677	521,097	323,001	41,490	29,057
1987	8,907	2,906	553,086	342,761	46,228	28,421
1988	8,436	3,035	456,222	278,019	28,083	18,004
1989	10,081	3,786	413,928	235,890	4,931	3,132
1990	7,500	3,415	403,428	231,053	3,741	2,243
1991[2]	923	415	98,465	53,495	—	—
1992[3]	2,788	1,143	396,339	203,168	—	—
1993[3]	1,824	685	338,161	168,567	—	—
1993[4]	573	191	165,269	81,059	—	—
1993[5]	949	476	97,177	48,339	—	—

[1] At the end of 1990 statistics for disqualifications of benefit due to premature termination of training, ceased to be collected separately and cannot therefore be shown.
[2] Quarter year March. At the end of 1990 statistics ceased to be collected by calendar year and changed to a financial year the quarter ending March 1991 is therefore shown as a separate quarter.
[3] Year ending March.
[4] Half year September.
[5] Quarter year December.

SERPS

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of the population of working age in Britain is *(a)* currently contributing to the state earnings-related pension scheme or *(b)* currently opted-out of SERPS and is earning above the national insurance minimum contributions level.

Mr. Hague *[pursuant to his reply, 20 April 1993, c. 517]:* During 1991-92—the latest date for which information is available—of the population of working age in Great Britain:

a. 15·4 per cent. had earnings above the National Insurance Lower Earnings Level (LEL) and paid National Insurance Contributions to count towards the State Earnings Related Scheme (SERPS);
b. 34·2 per cent. had earnings above the LEL and were contracted out of SERPS (including those who are members of an Appropriate Personal Pension Scheme);
c. 3·0 per cent. had earnings above the LEL and had worked in both contracted in and contracted out employments.

Source: 1 per cent. sample of the National Insurance Recording System and Office of Population Censuses and Surveys mid 1992 population estimates.

WALES

Tirfounder Fields Development Site, Aberdare

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will exercise his powers under part X of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 to direct the Cynon Valley borough council and the Mid Glamorgan county council to dispose of their interest in land required for access to the development site at Tirfounder Fields, Aberdare, owned by Landare Investments, subject to conditions that any purchaser shall provide appropriate means of public access to that development site;

(2) if he will exercise his powers under part X of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 to direct the Cynon Valley borough council and the Mid Glamorgan county council to dispose of their interest in land required by Landare Investments for access to their development site at Tirfounder Fields, Aberdare, to Landare Investments.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Government's policy is to use the powers of direction under part X of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 in circumstances where land is being held by public bodies without good cause. I understand that both Mid Glamorgan county council and Cynon Valley borough council have agreed to dispose of the relevant land. In those circumstances, a direction would not be appropriate.

Coastal Pollution (Genetic Abnormalities)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received during the past two months alleging that there is a danger of genetic abnormalities to babies associated with pollution of the coastline; what investigations the Welsh Office is making of this issue; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Fourteen representations have been received during the past two months. The Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys has completed its analysis of the geographical pattern of limb reduction defects in England and Wales, the results of which were announced in the House on 20 April. Separately the steering committee of the small area health statistics unit, which is partially funded by the Welsh Office, is considering the feasibility of conducting a more detailed study into the geographical distribution of these defects.

Training

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are currently engaged in publicly funded training in Wales *(a)* in total and *(b)* by training subject area; and if he will provide similar figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Redwood: The total numbers engaged in publicly funded training since 31 March 1989 and in subsequent years are shown in table A. Comparable figures for years prior to 1989 are not available.

An analysis of those in training by subject area for September 1992 and September 1993 is shown in table B. Comparable figures for years prior to 1992 are not available. Courses are available to meet training demand for 16 to 19-year-olds under the policy set out to Parliament.

Table A
Wales in training

	Total
March 1989	37,340
March 1990	38,594
March 1991	26,604
March 1992	26,629
March 1993	25,883
February 1994	25,544

Note: Figures for March 1994 are not yet available.

Table B
Wales in training by subject area

	September 1992		September 1993	
	Youth training Per cent.	Employment training Per cent.	Youth training Per cent.	Training for work Per cent.
Initial training	2	5	13	14
Managers and Administrators	>1	1	>1	3
Professional occupations	>1	>1	>1	2
Assoc. Professional and Technical	4	6	4	4
Clerical and Secretarial	14	29	15	25
Craft and related occupations	39	31	29	30
Personal and Protective Service OCCS	13	9	13	6
Sales occupations	7	3	9	3
Plant and Machine Operatives	10	6	10	8
Other occupations	10	9	6	5

Economic Inactivity

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest information he has on levels of economic inactivity in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: According to the autumn 1993 labour force survey the number of economically inactive persons in Wales was 969,000. This represents 42 per cent. of all persons aged 16 and over in private households, student halls of residence and NHS accommodation. Individuals are classified as economically inactive if they are neither in employment nor unemployed on the International Labour Office measure. This includes people staying at home to run the household.

Environmental Protection

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning progress made in environmental protection, listing advances in each of the counties in Wales in each year since 1992.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: A wide range of action has been taken since 1992 to protect the Welsh environment, including the expansion of designated areas, the implementation of new pollution controls on industry and vehicles, improved energy efficiency, enhanced protection for the built heritage, major investment to improve bathing water quality and, as recently announced, a refocusing of the trunk road programme. Further details are provided in the "Environment in Wales" series of reports published by the Welsh Office.

Opencast Coal

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the outstanding planning applications for the opencasting of coal in Wales, county by county; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: This information is not collected centrally.

Asthma

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he has taken to limit the occurrence of asthma related to car exhaust emissions.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Welsh Office is concerned about the rise in the incidence of asthma and is working with the other Health Departments to find the causes. This includes investigating the possibility that road traffic emissions are an important contributory cause. A sub-group of the Committee on Medical Effects of Air Pollutants is to undertake a major review of asthma and air pollution and will report later this year. A range of measures is being taken to reduce car exhaust emissions in Wales. In addition the air quality help line provides a public information service enabling asthmatics to take steps to reduce their exposure, should air pollution levels become high.

Pupil Statistics

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for each education authority in Wales, and for Wales as a whole, the number of *(a)* pupils in assisted places schemes in secondary schools, *(b)* pupils in secondary schools in total for each year since 1987, and *(c)* the number in *(a)* as a percentage of *(b)*.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The assisted places scheme provides assistance to parents to enable their children to attend certain independent schools. The information requested is as follows:

	Number of pupils on the Assisted Places Scheme (a)	Number of pupils aged 11 and over in independent schools (b)	Assisted pupils as a percentage of pupils aged 11 and over in independent schools	Number of pupils in maintained secondary schools (c)	Pupils on the Assisted Places Scheme as a percentage of all pupils
1987-88					
Clwyd	158	1,712	9·2	29,160	0·5
Dyfed	21	489	4·3	24,173	0·1
Gwent	209	1,370	15·3	30,855	0·6
Gwynedd	0	734	0·0	17,486	0·0
Mid Glamorgan	0	357	0·0	39,940	0·0
Powys	46	502	9·2	8,314	0·5
South Glamorgan	188	1,611	11·7	27,777	0·6
West Glamorgan	0	484	0·0	24,274	0·0
WALES	622	7,259	8·6	201,979	0·3
1988-89					
Clwyd	156	1,681	9·3	27,875	0·5
Dyfed	28	523	5·4	23,940	0·1
Gwent	204	1,389	14·7	29,566	0·7
Gwynedd	0	763	0·0	16,581	0·0
Mid Glamorgan	0	359	0·0	38,017	0·0
Powys	52	518	10·0	8,079	0·6
South Glamorgan	193	1,601	12·1	27,063	0·7
West Glamorgan	0	421	0·0	23,434	0·0
WALES	633	7,255	8·7	194,555	0·3
1989-90					
Clwyd	145	1,691	8·6	26,963	0·5
Dyfed	32	540	5·9	23,422	0·1
Gwent	206	1,391	14·8	28,543	0·7
Gwynedd	0	723	0·0	15,743	0·0
Mid Glamorgan	0	342	0·0	36,670	0·0
Powys	58	543	10·7	7,909	0·7
South Glamorgan	190	1,713	11·1	26,142	0·7
West Glamorgan	0	366	0·0	22,766	0·0
WALES	631	7,309	8·6	188,158	0·3
1990-91					
Clwyd	149	1,656	9·0	26,759	0·5
Dyfed	39	554	7·0	23,527	0·2
Gwent	201	1,356	14·8	28,445	0·7
Gwynedd	0	683	0·0	15,474	0·0
Mid Glamorgan	0	346	0·0	36,368	0·0
Powys	70	530	13·2	7,829	0·8
South Glamorgan	175	1,687	10·4	26,244	0·6
West Glamorgan	0	343	0·0	22,846	0·0
WALES	634	7,155	8·9	187,492	0·3
1991-92					
Clwyd	158	1,595	9·9	27,212	0·5
Dyfed	48	509	9·4	24,225	0·2
Gwent	221	1,337	16·5	29,116	0·7
Gwynedd	0	680	0·0	15,532	0·0
Mid Glamorgan	0	358	0·0	37,263	0·0
Powys	76	532	14·3	7,889	0·9
South Glamorgan	159	1,700	9·4	26,919	0·6
West Glamorgan	0	317	0·0	23,104	0·0
WALES	662	7,028	9·4	191,260	0·3
1992-93					
Clwyd	177	1,349	13·1	27,711	0·6
Dyfed	52	551	9·4	24,463	0·2
Gwent	219	1,315	16·7	29,734	0·7
Gwynedd	0	713	0·0	15,620	0·0
Mid Glamorgan	0	306	0·0	38,198	0·0
Powys	81	509	15·9	7,979	1·0
South Glamorgan	171	1,617	10·6	27,601	0·6
West Glamorgan	0	280	0·0	23,449	0·0
WALES	700	6,640	10·5	194,755	0·3

(a) At September each year.
(b) At January each year.
(c) Includes number of pupils in LEA and Grant maintained secondary schools, and pupils aged 11 and over in special schools.

Secondary Schools

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for each local education authority in Wales, and for Wales as a whole, *(a)* the number of grant-maintained secondary schools, the total public spending associated with them, and the average public spending per school, *(b)* the number of non-grant-maintained secondary schools, the total public spending associated with them, and the average public spending per school and *(c)* the total number of secondary schools, the total public spending associated with them, and the average public spending per school.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The most recent financial year for which data are available for both local education authority-maintained and grant-maintained schools is 1992-93. The information is given in the table:

Total public spending on secondary schools for 1992-93

LEA area	*Status*	*Total public spending*	*Number of schools*	*Spending per school*
Clwyd	LEA maintained	75,312,000	32	2,353,500
	Grant maintained[1]	715,144	1	715,144
	All maintained	76,027,144	33	2,303,853
Dyfed	LEA maintained	63,592,000	31	2,051,355
	Grant maintained	0	0	n/a
	All maintained	63,592,000	31	2,051,355
Gwent	LEA maintained	75,282,000	31	2,428,452
	Grant maintained[2]	1,861,639	2	930,820
	All maintained	77,143,639	33	2,337,686
Gwynedd	LEA maintained	43,111,000	23	1,874,391
	Grant maintained	0	0	n/a
	All maintained	43,111,000	23	1,874,391
Mid Glamorgan	LEA maintained	102,402,000	42	2,438,143
	Grant maintained	0	0	n/a
	All maintained	102,402,000	42	2,438,143
Powys	LEA maintained	21,390,000	13	1,645,385
	Grant maintained	0	0	n/a
	All maintained	21,390,000	13	1,645,385
South Glamorgan	LEA maintained	63,470,000	27	2,350,741
	Grant maintained	0	0	n/a
	All maintained	63,470,000	27	2,350,741
West Glamorgan	LEA maintained	62,438,000	26	2,401,462
	Grant maintained	2,652,015	1	2,652,015
	All maintained	65,090,015	27	2,410,741
Wales	LEA maintained	506,997,000	225	2,253,320
	Grant maintained[1 2]	5,228,798	4	1,307,200
	All maintained	512,225,798	229	2,236,794

[1] Includes a school that opted out on 1 January 1993. The funding for this school only relates to the period 1 January 1993 to 31 March 1993.
[2] Includes a school that opted out on 1 September 1992. The funding for this school only relates to the period 1 September 1992 to 31 March 1993.
n/a=Not available.

Notes
The number of schools is taken from the January 1993 STATS 1.
LEA expenditure comprises:
- Net current expenditure on secondary education.
- Gross capital expenditure on secondary education.
- Spending on schools under budget heads other than education is excluded.
- Expenditure on pupils at Grant Maintained schools is excluded.

Grant Maintained school expenditure comprises:
- Annual maintenance grant.
- Special purposes grant.
- Transitional grant.
- Capital grant
- LEA expenditure on pupils at Grant Maintained schools.
- Revenue the school raises itself is excluded.
- The use of school reserves is excluded.

Hospital Treatment

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for each health authority in Wales and for Wales as a whole *(a)* the total number of people who have received hospital treatment requiring at least one night's stay for the latest available 12-month period and *(b)* the total number of people awaiting hospital treatment for more than one year; and if he will express *(b)* as a percentage of *(a)*.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information which relates to in-patient cases and numbers waiting for treatment in Welsh hospitals is given in the following table.

Health authority area[1]	(a) In-patient cases[2]	(b) People waiting more than 1 year[3]	(c) (b) as a percentage of (a)
Clwyd	73,272	660	0·9
East Dyfed	41,697	334	0·8
Gwent	74,742	1,157	1·5
Gwynedd	41,004	367	0·9
Mid Glamorgan	98,629	1,030	1·0
Pembrokeshire	17,446	535	3·1
Powys	9,070	0	0·0
South Glamorgan	82,741	1,396	1·7
West Glamorgan	70,023	351	0·5
Wales	508,624	5,830	1·1

[1] Figures are given according to the district health authority area in which hospitals are situated. NHS Trusts are included.
[2] In the year ending 30 September 1993.
[3] People who, at 30 September 1993, were on an in-patient waiting list in Wales and had been waiting for more than one year.

Wheelchair Repairs

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the award of a contract to SERCO for wheelchair repairs within the NHS in Wales; and what representations he has received in relation to the award of this contract and its conformity with the tender advertised in relation to facilities management and the direct provision of the repair services.

Mr. Redwood: The Welsh Health Commons Services Authority is responsible for the management of the artificial limbs and appliance service in Wales and has awarded the contract for the repair of wheelchairs to SERCO.

I have received no representations about the award of the contract.

Cardiff Bay Barrage

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the Balfour Beatty Costain construction consortium and the chairman of the Cardiff Bay development corporation concerning a starting date for the construction of the Cardiff bay barrage and guarantees and indemnities relating thereto.

Mr. Redwood: None.

Company Liquidations

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much public money Deeside Colour Direct received by way of grant before it went into receivership; how much public money the successor company Patina Press Ltd. received before it went into receivership; and if he will list the individuals who were known to be directors of both companies.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 18 March 1994]:* I have written to the hon. Member and will place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Crown Servants

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 20 April, *Official Report*, columns *577-80*, how many of the Crown servants applying to become consultants were *(a)* to join existing consultants firms and *(b)* to become independent consultants; and what were the civil service grades involved.

Mr. Waldegrave: All applications were for permission to accept independent consultancy commissions. Applications to undertake consultancy work on behalf of an existing firm are not separately identified in central statistics and could be isolated only at disproportionate cost. The statistics cover civil service grades from grade 1 to higher executive officer, together with equivalent diplomatic service grades and armed forces ranks.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 20 April, *Official Report*, columns *577-80*, what were the civil service grades involved of those Crown servants applying through the business appointments system.

Mr. Waldegrave: All grades from grade 1 to executive officer in the civil service and their diplomatic service equivalents. In addition, the statistics included members of ranks in the Royal Navy from admiral to lieutenant commander, in the Army from field marshal to major, and in the Royal Air Force from marshal of the Royal Air Force to flight lieutenant. The numbers of applications by each grade or rank could be obtained only at disproportionate expense.

Market Testing

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which public services, or parts of public services, are not appropriate for market testing and contracting out; and what criteria are used in establishing these.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government's approach is to consider each candidate activity carefully on its merits to determine whether market testing or contracting out would be appropriate at any given time. Criteria include likely improvement in value for money, ease of avoiding potential conflicts of interest, protection of national security, safeguards for confidentiality, strategic control over resource allocation and the need for effective policy formulation.

Parliamentary Questions

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the provisions of the code of practice on access to government information regarding referral of refusal of information to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration will apply to hon. Members in respect of failure to provide information in response to parliamentary questions.

Mr. Waldegrave: Subject to the disproportionate cost rule, there is no question of withholding from Parliament information which would be available under the code of

practice on access to government information. However, neither the code nor the powers of investigation of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration apply to proceedings of Parliament and hon. Members have more direct means than the code of seeking information from Ministers.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in what circumstances a member of the public will be able to obtain information under the code of practice on access to government information which has been refused in response to a question for written answer put down by an hon. Member.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am aware of only one set of circumstances. By long-standing convention, a Minister may decline to answer a parliamentary question if to do so would involve disproportionate cost. A member of the public might be able to obtain information refused on these grounds, provided that they were prepared to pay an appropriate charge, meeting the request did not involve an unreasonable diversion of resources and the material was not otherwise exempt from disclosure under part II of the code of practice.

Private Security Firms

Mr. George: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many private security firms have been employed by his Department for each of the last 10 years; what has been the annual value of the contracts; and if he will estimate how many guards have been employed for each of those years.

Mr. David Davis: During the past 10 years the Cabinet Office—including agencies, HMSO and the Central Office of Information—has employed private security firms as follows:

Year	*Number of firms*	*Annual cost (£)*
1984-85	7	215,954
1985-86	10	311,040
1986-87	11	388,829
1987-88	11	395,098
1988-89	11	460,082
1989-90	12	484,816
1990-91	12	632,433
1991-92	13	722,195
1992-93	14	847,528
1993-94	14	875,873

It is not possible to estimate how many guards have been employed for each of these years.

TRANSPORT

Mr. Peter Gerosa

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what dates Mr. Peter Gerosa joined and left his Department; what position he held; and what were the circumstances of his departure.

Mr. Norris: Mr. Gerosa joined the civil service on 13 August 1945 as a clerk in the Foreign Office. He worked in various Departments, joining the Ministry of Transport as an assistant secretary on 16 May 1966. He worked in the Departments of Transport and of the Environment until he retired early on 31 October 1982.

A66

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when his Department last undertook a traffic study on the A66 between Scotch Corner and Penrith; and what were the conclusions.

Mr. Key: Traffic studies were undertaken on the A66 as part of the trans-Pennine study published on 23 September 1992. Scheme specific figures were collated for the now completed scheme at Bowes to county boundary, the Stainmore to Banksgate scheme currently under construction and the Temple Sowerby to Winderwarth improvement now in preparation.

Commercial Drivers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to introduce new regulations on the time commercial drivers may work and the use of tachographs.

Mr. Key: The European Commission is preparing proposals for an improved tachograph system to strengthen the control and enforcement of the EC drivers hours regulation. In the light of responses earlier this year to our letter of consultation, we are considering whether any changes are desirable in the domestic rules on driving hours and duty limits which apply to many passenger and goods vehicles exempted from the EC regulations on drivers' hours and tachographs.

Railways

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what powers he has to direct the Director of Franchising to include specific services within a shadow franchise or, subsequently, franchise contract.

Mr. Freeman: The Secretary of State has powers under section 5 of the Railways Act 1993 to give objectives, instructions and guidance to the Franchising Director with respect to the provision of passenger railway services in Great Britain. The Franchising Director is under a duty to exercise his functions under the Act, including those of designating services for franchising and of drawing up the terms of franchise agreements, in a manner which he considers best calculated to fulfil those objectives in accordance with the instructions and guidance.

In the objectives, instructions and guidance he issued on 22 March, the Secretry of State instructed the Franchising Director that, for the initial letting of franchises, his specificaiton of minimum service levels for railway passenger services is to be based on that being provided by BR immediately before franchising, taking into account the existence of, and justification for, seasonal variations in service schedule.

SCOTLAND

Radioactive Clothing (Dounreay)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement as to how the clothing of a German visitor to the nuclear power station in Dounreay in March became radioactive; what was the cause of this incident; what was the cost of supplying alternative clothing; and on how many other occasions this has occurred.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 15 April 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer my hon. Friend the Minister of State at the Department of Employment gave him on 13 April 1994, *Official Report*, column *190*.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by district, hectarage and location the Forestry Commission land sold in Scotland in each of the past five financial years where *(a)* access agreements have been concluded and *(b)* access agreements have not been concluded and the price of each piece per hectare.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 22 April 1994]:* Lists giving details of the areas of forest land sold in Scotland by calendar year to December 1993 are held in the Library of the House. The lists show the price paid where the purchaser has agreed that such information can be made public. Access agreements had not been concluded for any areas of land sold by the end of 1993. However, agreements had been concluded or were being negotiated in respect of 19 woodlands which were in the process of being sold and local authorities had expressed interest in negotiating agreements in 22 other areas.

Greater Glasgow Health Board

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total number of employees of Greater Glasgow health board, broken down by categories and grades, at the end of each of the last five financial years.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 April 1994]:* The latest available information is shown in a table which has been placed in the Library. Figures for 1989 for staff other than doctors and dentists are available only at disproportionate cost.

Scottish Homes

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with Scottish Homes regarding stock transfers; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 25 April 1994]:* My right hon. Friend has issued guidance to Scottish Homes regarding the disposal of its stock. The arrangements in particular cases are for Scottish Homes to consider in terms of its published procedures. Transfers of stock require my right hon. Friend's approval and he will require to be satisfied that they represent value for money and that tenants' interests have been fully considered.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to ensure that the transfer of Scottish Homes housing stock within the Wyndford area of Glasgow to Cube Housing Association will be completed by 12 May; and if he will also ensure that the tenants affected by the transfer will not be subjected to any additional increase in rents imposed by Scottish Homes on 15 May if such transfer is further delayed.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 25 April 1994]:* Final proposals relating to the transfer of Scottish Homes' stock in Glasgow to Cube housing association were sent to the Scottish Office Environment Department on 6 April 1994. My right hon. Friend has made it clear that he will not approve a transfer of Scottish Homes' stock unless he is satisfied that it represents value for money and that tenants rights and interests have been fully considered. A decision will be taken when those aspects have been considered fully and it would not be appropriate to constrain this consideration by prescribing a firm date by which the transfer should be completed. Decisions relating to the rent payable by the tenants concerned are entirely a matter for Scottish Homes.

Coastal and Flood Defences

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in what circumstances local authorities may undertake work to protect private land or property from coastal erosion or flooding; and how such work is funded.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 25 April 1994]:* Regional and islands councils have wide powers under the Coast Protection Act 1949 to take such measures as they consider necessary to protect any land in their areas against erosion and encroachment by the sea. The councils also have powers to prevent or mitigate flooding of non-agricultural land under the Flood Prevention (Scotland) Act 1961. Those powers make no distinction as to ownership of the land concerned and it is for councils to consider each scheme on its merits. Grants are available to councils towards the eligible costs of coast protection or flood prevention schemes approved or confirmed by the Secretary of State.

Police Complaints Authority

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he has given to the establishment of a Police Complaints Authority or similar body in Scotland; and what are his conclusions.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Following a review of the existing complaints procedures by Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary, published on 11 February 1993, my right hon. Friend concluded that a Police Complaints Authority would not be established for Scotland.

Sheehy Inquiry

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which representatives of the local authorities in Scotland he has met to discuss the Sheehy report; and when.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My noble and learned Friend the Minister of State has met representatives of the three Scottish police associations collectively and separately to hear their views on the Sheehy report. Individual meetings took place on 19 August, 30 August and 9 September 1993. The associations also made their views known at meetings of the Police Advisory Board for Scotland, chaired by my noble and learned Friend, on 12 March, 9 July and 20 December 1993, and also at a meeting on 20 September 1993 between the United Kingdom police associations and Home Department Ministers. Later meetings have considered the legislative implementation of the Government's conclusions on the report.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many visits to Scotland and of what duration were made by each member of the Sheehy inquiry into the police.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is included in appendix I to the "Report of the Inquiry into Police Responsibility and Rewards" (In Cm 2280.II, June 1993).

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which members of the Sheehy inquiry into the police have had experience or knowledge of life in Scotland or policing in Scotland; and what is that experience and knowledge.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government considered it important for the inquiry into police responsibilities and rewards to be conducted by a fully independent team with expertise in a number of disciplines. The team included Professor Sir Colin Campbell, Vice-Chancellor of the university of Nottingham, who was educated in Scotland, graduated in law and then lectured in law at Scottish universities.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on what grounds he decided that the Sheehy inquiry should extend to Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Because the terms of reference of the inquiry were to examine the rank structure, remuneration and conditions of service of the police and these are issues which are treated on a United Kingdom basis.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which representatives of the police he has met in Scotland to discuss the Sheehy report; and when.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My noble and learned Friend the Minister of State met representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on 11 August 1993. Members of the convention also attended meetings of the Police Advisory Board for Scotland, chaired by my noble and learned Friend, on 12 March, 9 July and on 20 December 1993, when the Sheehy report was discussed.

Police

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the major ways in which police practices, control and discipline are specific to Scotland and the reasons for this.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: What matters is that arrangements in Scotland are right for Scottish circumstances; in some areas the resemblance to arrangements south of the border is closer than in others.

Highlands (Tourism)

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many submissions he has received about the future structure of the tourist industry in the highlands; and what percentages favoured *(a)* a single highland area toursit board or *(b)* more than one highland area tourist board.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 20 April 1994]:* All the options recommended to me by the Scottish tourist board favoured a single ATB for the highlands. I received 16 unsolicited representations from organisations suggesting various alternative structures. I also received 86 similar representations from members of ATBs at the request of their boards. Two representations supported the STB advice.

Dewe Rogerson

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will define the role of Dewe Rogerson on behalf of his Department in relation to rail privatisation; and how much it has been paid to date.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office has had no contact with Dewe Rogerson in relation to rail privatisation.

Job Creation

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many jobs have been created by each local enterprise company in *(a)* manufacturing and *(b)* services industry in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Stewart: The local enterprise companies have not been in existence for five years. Information on the jobs that they have created during the period since they were established is not held centrally in the form requested. I have therefore asked the chairmen of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise to respond direct to the hon. Member about this matter.

Mink Farms

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether mink are currently present at Dundurn mink farm, St. Fillans, Perthshire.

Sir Hector Monro: No.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether mink are currently present at Deeside mink farm, Burnside, Maryculter, Aberdeen; and if he will give details of the last licence issued for this establishment.

Sir Hector Monro: No mink are present. A licence issued with effect from 1 January 1993 expired on 31 December 1993.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when Dundurn mink farm, St. Fillans was last licensed to keep mink.

Sir Hector Monro: April 1990.

Homeless Households

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many households have applied to local authorities as homeless each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The latest complete information on the number of households who have applied to local authorities as homeless is published in table 2 of the statistical bulletin HSG/1994/3, "Operation of the Homeless Persons Legislation in Scotland 1982-83 to 1992-93: District Analyses". Information for the previous years was published in table 1 of the statistical

bulletin HSG/1992/1, "Operation of the Homeless Persons Legislation in Scotland 1979-80 to 1990-91". These bulletins are available in the Library.

Health Boards Budgets

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is *(a)* the HIV and *(b)* drugs budget for each health board in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 22 April 1994]:* The resources available to Scottish health boards and the state hospital for HIV/AIDS and drug misuse services in 1994-95 are set out in the table.

	HIV-Care and Treatment	*HIV and AIDS Prevention*	*HIV-Drugs-related*	*Drug misuse*	*Total*
Argyll and Clyde	110,900	284,384	117,319	107,800	620,403
Ayrshire and Arran	61,600	224,970	245,900	210,345	742,815
Borders	64,400	87,800	7,600	25,800	185,600
Dumfries and Galloway	72,600	116,300	46,100	39,000	274,000
Fife	70,900	236,260	104,750	77,250	489,160
Forth Valley	151,600	189,400	139,000	65,500	545,500
Grampian	550,000	404,000	332,000	111,000	1,397,000
Greater Glasgow	2,388,000	805,000	1,412,000	807,000	5,412,000
Highland	81,700	257,700	0	42,300	381,700
Lanark	196,000	404,000	36,000	118,000	754,000
Lothian	4,253,865	1,422,561	1,589,568	674,904	[2]7,940,898
Orkney	0	28,000	0	5,500	33,500
Shetland	2,500	34,559	4,500	6,695	48,254
Tayside	943,000	824,000	527,000	273,000	[2]2,567,000
Western Isles	500	52,500	0	10,000	63,000
State Hospital	2,700	27,100	0	0	29,800
	8,950,265	5,398,534	4,561,737	2,574,094	21,484,630
					[1]600,000
					22,084,630

[1] The amounts shown may be supplemented in-year if required in the light of monitoring or emerging needs. A reserve of £600,000 will be available for this purpose.

[2] In the cases of Lothian and Tayside Health Boards action is being taken in the first six months of the financial year to specify clearly a number of services to be provided in respect of HIV/AIDS requirements. Initial agreements covering these services relate to the first six months; the notional annual figure shown is therefore subject to review within that period. Initial amounts of £5,857,000 for Lothian Health Board and £2,225,000 for Tayside Health Board have been allocated.

Ambulance Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentages of ambulances in each service in Scotland responded within *(a)* eight minutes and *(b)* 14 to 20 minutes to emergency calls in 1993-94.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 April 1994]:* There is only one ambulance service for the whole of Scotland. The information is as follows:

	Response	
Year	*0 to 8 minutes Per cent.*	*14 to 20 minutes Per cent.*
1993-94	51	96

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if all staff currently employed by new town development corporations will be included in the ring-fencing arrangements which will apply to the staff of local authorities at the time of the proposed reorganisation of local government in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 April 1994]:* No decision has been taken on whether there will be any ring-fencing arrangements for staff when local government is reorganised in Scotland.

Higher Education

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the numbers and percentages of students in higher education undertaking two-year diploma courses and three and four-year degree courses in each of the past 10 years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 25 April 1994]:* The information readily available is in respect of 1992-93. The number and percentage of students in higher education in Scotland undertaking three and four-year degree courses, higher national diploma courses and other higher education is given in the table.

Full-time undergraduate students	*Number*	*Percentage*
Three-year degree	16,499	15
Four-year degree	57,604	54
Other degree (length not known)	10,893	10
HND (two-year courses)	12,244	11
Other qualification	10,148	9
Total students in higher education	107,388	100

HEALTH

Nursing Staff Deployment

13. **Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the redeployment of nursing staff from the acute to the community sector.

Mr. Sackville: Changing patterns of health care are leading to the development of new roles and opportunities for nurses in the community. Government policy is that employers determine the work force they require and the training staff need.

NHS Capital Programme

14. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the NHS capital programme for the financial year 1993-94; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The value of the national health service capital programme for the financial year 1993-94 amounted to over £1·8 billion.

This was the largest provision for capital in the history of the NHS.

15. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate has been made of the change in the number of patients treated in NHS trusts since 1991; and what was the change in other hospitals over the same period.

Mr. Sackville: All hospitals are showing improved performance and trusts are at the leading edge. The growth in finished consultant episodes for general and acute specialties in national health service trusts for the latest year available, 1992-93 was 5·3 per cent. and the comparable figure for directly managed units was 3·6 per cent.

Drugs Expenditure

16. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she plans to take to reduce expenditure on drugs in the national health service.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Government have introduced a number of initiatives to encourage effective prescribing. Our aim is to reduce the rate of growth in the national health service drugs bill, while ensuring that people get the medicines they need.

Mother and Child Health

17. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how levels of maternal, perinatal and infant mortality, and of child health protection, have changed in the last 10 years.

Mr. Sackville: Infant, perinatal and maternal mortality rates are now the lowest levels ever recorded. We have placed a copy of tables showing the rates for the last 10 years for these definitions, and maternal mortality, in the Library.

Incidences of childhood diseases are also at record low levels. Over 90 per cent. of all children are now immunised against the major childhood diseases.

Junior Doctors (Hours of Duty)

18. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress is being made to reduce the hours of duty of junior doctors in the north west region.

Dr. Mawhinney: Progress in implementing the new deal to reduce junior doctors' hours has been very encouraging in the north-west.

In the North West regional health authority area, posts contracted for more than 83 hours a week were eliminated by September 1993. By that date the number of hard-pressed on-call posts contracted for between 72 and 83 hours a week had fallen by 23 per cent. over the previous year. Our priority this year is to tackle these hard-pressed posts.

Consumer Complaints

19. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the procedures for dealing with consumer complaints since the reorganisation of the health service.

Dr. Mawhinney: We will shortly publish for consultation the report of the independent committee we commissioned to review national health service complaints procedures within the United Kingdom.

GP Fundholders, Suffolk

21. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practitioner practices are now participating in the fundholding initiative in Suffolk; and what proportion of those eligible this represents in the county.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are 21 fundholding practices in Suffolk covering 36 per cent. of the population.

Competitive Tendering

22. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total amount of savings she estimates to have been made as a result of competitive tendering of services in the national health service; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: It is estimated that since the introduction of competitive tendering in 1983 the cumulative saving to the national health service has amounted to something in the order of £1 billion.

Hospital Admissions

23. **Mr. Denham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the incidence of restrictions of hospital admissions to emergency cases only.

Mr. Sackville: Patients continue to receive high-quality treatment promptly. In the few instances when there have been restrictions alternative arrangements are made to ensure patients are treated appropriately.

NHS Trusts, South Thames

24. **Mr. Congdon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of hospital and community health services in the South Thames region is now carried out by NHS trusts.

Mr. Sackville: From 1 April 1994 there are 61 national health service trusts providing hospital and community health services within the South Thames area, representing more than 90 per cent. of units.

Ovarian Cancer

25. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals she has to improve early diagnosis of ovarian cancer.

Mr. Sackville: The Government fully recognise the need to find a proven method of diagnosing ovarian cancer early to offer the greatest chance of a cure. However, any screening method must demonstrate its acceptability and effectiveness in reducing mortality before introduction nationally. A number of research projects are seeking currently to find a method sensitive enough to detect ovarian cancer without the need for investigative surgery, but will require full evaluation before they can be considered for a national based screening programme.

Special Transitional Grant

26. **Ms Rachel Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received regarding the requirement to spend 85 per cent. of the special transitional grant within the private or voluntary sector.

Mr. Bowis: The requirement is for at least 85 per cent. of the social security transfer element of the special transitional grant to be used on community care services provided by the independent sector. One hundred per cent. of this social security money was previously spent in the independent sector. We have received a number of representations from the independent sector, local authorities and others.

Kidney Transplants

27. **Mr. Wells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many kidney transplants were carried out *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: The number of kidney transplants performed in 1979 was 842; in 1993 the number had almost doubled to 1,576—provisional.

(Figures provided by the United Kingdom Transplant Support Service Authority UKTSSA).

Tobacco Advertising

28. **Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had on banning all tobacco advertising from hoardings within 1 or 3 miles of schools; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier today.

Guy's Hospital

29. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what notice she is taking of representations arguing against the reduction of beds or the closure of the accident and emergency department at Guy's hospital.

Dr. Mawhinney: All representations are given serious consideration. Proposals for changes in the disposition of services at the Guy's and St. Thomas's Hospital Trust will, in any case, be the subject of full public consultation.

Morning-after Pill

Mr. Khabra: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received on making the morning-after pill available on request from a pharmacist; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: None specifically about pharmacy provision. There have been 16 letters from the public about wider availability generally; two letters were in support and 14 opposed.

Paramedics, London Ambulance Service

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many paramedics are currently employed by the London ambulance service; and what the figure was five years ago.

Mr. Sackville: The London Ambulance Service currently has over 400 trained paramedics compared to only seven in 1989. This reflects the excellent progress which is being made on paramedic training.

Radioactive Material

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether premises in which radiotherapy machines have been situated can be immediately re-used after the machinery has been removed; and what agency is responsible for the safety of sites and buildings during and after such removal.

Mr. Sackville: There is no reason why premises in which radiotherapy equipment has been situated should not be re-used immediately after its removal. There is no residual emission following decommissioning. National Health Service Estates, an executive agency of the Department of Health, has issued comprehensive building guidance covering most Departments. Regulatory aspects of building design and construction are enforced by the local building control authority; safety of sites during use is enforced by the Health and Safety Executive.

NHS Supplies Authority

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what average percentage savings in purchasing costs were assessed by the firms retained by the National Health Service Supplies Authority or its divisions to benchmark prices as being achievable by the authority on the basis of the best available market price for a representative basket of items in comparison with prices paid or negotiated for the same items during the most recent period for which divisional data are available.

Mr. Sackville: For an annualised sample basket of 392 goods taken at March 1994 National Health Service Supplies' purchasing performance was 0·4 per cent. better than that achieved in the same period covered by the PI (UK) Ltd. analysis.

Purchasing Authorities (Buildings)

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money has been spent *(a)* buying, *(b)* building, *(c)* leasing and *(d)* equipping buildings for purchasing authorities in each district health authority in each of the last two financial years for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not separately identifiable in the financial accounts of health authorities.

Tuberculosis

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information is held by her Department on the number of children infected by tuberculosis in *(a)* each of the London boroughs and *(b)* England.

Mr. Sackville: The latest available information is shown in the table.

Notified cases of tuberculosis for children (aged 0-16) in England and each London Borough, 1992.

	1992
England	855
City of London	—
Barking and Dagenham	1
Barnet	40
Bexley	3
Brent	19
Bromley	3
Camden	8
Croydon	6
Ealing	46
Enfield	2
Greenwich	4
Hackney	7
Hammersmith and Fulham	3
Haringey	8
Harrow	6
Havering	1
Hillingdon	6
Hounslow	10
Islington	5
Kensington and Chelsea	3
Kingston upon Thames	—
Lambeth	8
Lewisham	1
Merton	—
Newham	9
Redbridge	2
Richmond upon Thames	—
Southwark	9
Sutton	—
Tower Hamlets	27
Waltham Forest	1
Wandsworth	1
City of Westminster	19

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children in *(a)* each of the London boroughs and *(b)* England leave school without having been vaccinated against tuberculosis.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the allocations to each regional health authority for 1994-95; what assumptions in each case have been made about *(a)* cost uprating, *(b)* growth, *(c)* changes in capitation formulae and *(d)* cost improvement targets; and what were the allocations for 1993-94 on cash and standard price basis, making allowance for boundary changes where necessary.

Mr. Sackville: The table gives the information for the former 14 regional health authorities.

With effect from 1 April 1994, the number of regional health authorities has been reduced to eight. For regions which have been merged without boundary changes, the 1994-95 allocations for the new regions are as indicated in the table.

Adjustments for boundary changes are required between: Northern and Yorkshire and North West, for the transfer of South Cumbria health authority to North West; and North Thames and Anglian and Oxford, for the transfer of Bedfordshire health authority and Bedfordshire family health services authority to Anglia and Oxford. The required adjustments are being evaluated by the regions concerned and are not reflected in the table.

No changes were made between 1993-94 and 1994-95 to the capitation formula used to inform allocations to RHAs.

There are no cost improvement targets as such for RHAs, but in 1994-95, all RHAs are expected to produce a purchaser efficiency gain of 2·25 per cent.

Region	*1993-94 Actual Allocations (at 1993-94 prices) (£,000's)*	*1993-94 Revised Baseline (at 1993-94 prices) (£,000's)*	*1994-95 Allocation (at 1993-94 prices) (£,000's)*	*1994-95 Actual Allocations (at 1994-95 prices) (£,000's)*
(1)	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(4)*	*(5)*
Northern	1,159,723	1,160,008	1,172,223	1,219,112
Yorkshire	1,334,886	1,335,240	1,352,246	1,406,336
Northern and Yorkshire	2,494,609	2,495,248	2,524,469	2,625,448
Trent	1,672,751	1,673,336	1,699,928	1,767,925
East Anglia	704,794	704,955	719,684	748,471
Oxford	794,779	794,974	810,645	843,071
Anglia and Oxford	1,499,573	1,499,929	1,530,329	1,591,542
North West Thames	1,320,749	1,290,993	1,300,159	1,352,165
North East Thames	1,490,187	1,490,742	1,501,326	1,561,379
North Thames	2,810,936	2,781,735	2,801,485	2,913,544
South East Thames	1,439,276	1,439,540	1,461,366	1,519,821
South West Thames	1,116,107	1,110,509	1,118,394	1,163,130
South Thames	2,555,383	2,550,049	2,579,760	2,682,951
Wessex	1,033,656	1,067,848	1,092,774	1,136,485
South Western	1,185,708	1,185,957	1,204,946	1,253,144
South and West	2,219,364	2,253,805	2,297,720	2,389,629
West Midlands	1,855,142	1,855,472	1,884,765	1,960,156
Mersey	890,032	889,486	896,948	932,826
North Western	1,505,427	1,505,798	1,522,269	1,583,160
North West	2,395,459	2,395,284	2,419,217	2,515,986
ENGLAND	17,503,217	17,504,858	17,737,673	18,447,181

Notes:

1. Column 2 is the initial 1993-94 recurrent allocation for resident population.

2. Column 3 is the revised 1993-94 recurrent allocation used as the baseline for calculating 1994-95 allocations. It includes the effects of inter-authority transfers.
3. Column 4 is the initial 1994-95 recurrent allocation for resident population after distribution between regions of the 1·33 per cent. real terms growth for England as a whole.
4. Column 5 is the initial 1994-95 recurrent allocation for resident population after a 4 per cent. cash uplift reflecting the forecast increase in the GDP deflator.
5. The table reflects the initial recurrent allocations for resident population. Other sums for specific purposes are added during the year.

Patient Data

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to take over ownership of data on patients in general practice; and who currently owns the written data held on patients in general practice.

Mr. Sackville: Ownership of records on patients, maintained by general practitioners in accordance with their terms of service, is vested in family health services authorities and we have no plans to change that.

Safe Sex Guide

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to publish a guide to safe sexual practices for 16-year-olds and above.

Mr. Sackville: There is already a wide range of material available throughout the statutory and voluntary sectors containing information about safer sexual practices for 16-year-olds and above.

Child Abuse

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give estimates of the likely prevalence of *(a)* child sex abuse and *(b)* child physical abuse; and if she will make a statement about such estimates.

Mr. Bowis: The Department does not collect information from which the prevalence of these activities can be estimated. Information available centrally relates to the number of children placed on a child protection register because of a concern about harm or likelihood of harm. Of those on a register at 31 March 1993, concern about sexual abuse was recorded for 8,300 children and physical injury for 11,900.

Home Helps

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the levels of charges imposed by local authorities in England and Wales on persons not in receipt of income-related benefits for home helps.

Mr. Bowis: There is no requirement on local authorities to inform the Department of such charges.

GP Computer Costs

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to reimburse computer costs to general practitioners for provision of data for public health purposes.

Mr. Sackville: General practitioners are currently eligible to claim reimbursement of computer costs irrespective of whether they provide such data.

"Pocket Guide to Sex"

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans she has to publish those sections of the "Pocket Guide to Sex" containing information on contraception, avoiding unwanted pregnancies, safer sexual practices and avoiding AIDS and sexually-transmitted diseases;

(2) what is her policy on allowing the publication of the "Pocket Guide to Sex" by another publisher.

Dr. Mawhinney: These are matters for the Health Education Authority.

Departmental Publications

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for how many regular publications she was responsible in 1993-94; what was their circulation; and how many were obtainable by subscription.

Mr. Sackville: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Nurses

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to investigate race and sex discrimination in the selection of people applying for basic nurse training or in the promotion of nurses.

Mr. Sackville: Responsibility for selection of candidates for basic nurse training rests with the institutions where nurse training is undertaken.

National health service trusts and health authorities have been set specific goals in the Opportunity 2000 programme and the programme of action for ethnic minority staff in the NHS to promote equality of opportunity for women and ethnic minority staff in the NHS.

Consultant Medical Staff

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost to the NHS of consultant medical staff on paid suspension in 1992-93.

Dr. Mawhinney: Such costs are for employing authorities.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS consultant medical staff have been on paid suspension from duty for more than 12 months as at 1 January.

Dr. Mawhinney: Decisions on disciplinary action for consultant medical staff rest with the employing authority or trust. This includes whether to suspend a practitioner.

Interception of Communication Devices

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many instances of the use of interception of communication devices on NHS premises there have been in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Sackville: The information is not available centrally.

Genetic Engineering

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she has now taken as a result of the Nuffield Council on Bioethics' report on genetic engineering.

Mr. Sackville: I wrote to the hon. Member on 25 February 1994 concerning this matter and assured him that the Department of Health will keep in touch with patients' organisations and other Government Departments as genetic screening develops. A copy of my letter is available in the Library.

Hospital Treatment

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish for each health authority in England and for England as a whole *(a)* the total number of people who have received hospital treatment requiring at least one night's stay for the latest available 12-month period and *(b)* the total number of people awaiting hospital treatment for more than one year; and if she will express *(b)* as a percentage of *(a)*.

Mr. Sackville: The latest information on the number of finished consultant episodes for each health authority is shown in "Ordinary and day case admissions for England 1992-93". Information on the total number of people waiting more than one year for hospital in-patient or day case treatment at 30 September 1993 is shown in "Hospital Waiting List Statistics: England". Copies of both publications are available in the Library.

General Practitioners

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many GP doctors there are per patient in *(a)* inner London, *(b)* outer London and *(c)* the rest of the country and at what cost; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: At 1 October 1993, there were:

2,018 patients for every unrestricted general practitioner in Inner London;

2,065 patients for every unrestricted general practitioner in outer London;

1,881 patients for every unrestricted general practitioner in the rest of the country.

The latest information available on costs is drawn from the 1992-93 family health services authority accounts, and cost per GP has therefore been calculated using numbers of GPs at 1 October 1992.

	Number of GPs at 1 October 1992	*Number of patients at 1 October 1992*	*Total General Medical Service expenditure 1992-93*	*General Medical Service expenditure per GP 1992-93*
Inner London	2,037	4,197,519	£209,142,060	£101,672
Outer London	1,429	2,967,746	£138,060,429	£96,613
Rest of England	22,502	42,737,046	£2,076,257,152	£92,270

GP numbers have been increasing steadily over the last three years. Extra resources for primary care are an important part of the "Making London Better" initiative to improve health care in the Capital.

Laundry Services

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the policy of the Midlands Laundry Group on selling off the Birmingham and Coventry NHS laundry service;

(2) what consultations she has had with the West Midlands health authority regarding the Coopers and Lybrand report; and if she will make a statement on its recommendations;

(3) if she will make a statement regarding the future of the west midlands laundry service, with particular regard to the effects on the needs of the patients.

Mr. Sackville: No consultations have taken place regarding the Coopers and Lybrand report. These are matters for South Birmingham, North Birmingham and Coventry district health authorities. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Brian Stoten, Dr. M. D. Skillicorn and Mr. Gary Reay, the chairmen of the authorities, for details.

West Midlands Health Authority

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what discussions she has had with the West Midlands health authority regarding proposals for a management buy-out;

(2) what representations she has received from the employees of the west midlands health authority, members of the public, or other organisations regarding the proposals for privatisation of the laundry service.

Mr. Sackville: None.

First Aid Training

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received regarding the provision of first aid training for staff employed in residential care or nursing homes.

Mr. Bowis: None, other than one from the hon. Member.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what basic first aid training is required for care staff employed in residential care homes.

Mr. Bowis: Persons registered in respect of residential care homes for four or more residents are required to take adequate precautions against the risk of accidents, including the training of staff in first aid.

Nursing Homes (Deaths)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps she takes to monitor and act upon recommendations of coroner inquests into the circumstances of deaths of people in residential care or nursing homes;

(2) what steps she takes to monitor the number of accidental deaths of residents of residential care or nursing homes.

Mr. Bowis: It is the responsibility of local authorities or health authorities to carry out any monitoring of deaths of residents in residential care or nursing homes. They should ensure that the appropriate lessons are learnt and action is taken, including responding to any recommendations by coroners.

AIDS

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much each local authority has bid for AIDS support grant for 1994-95; and how much they were awarded.

Mr. Sackville: For 1994-95, local authorities were invited to submit expenditure plans against indicative allocations of AIDS support grant. These allocations were based on confidential information supplied to the Department by the Public Health Laboratory Service on the distribution of AIDS cases by local authority area, and were issued in circular LAC(94)3, copies of which are available in the Library.

Where this formula would mean a reduction in grant in 1994-95, local authorities were advised that there might, in exceptional circumstances, be some scope to adjust allocations on a transitional basis and that applications for additional grant could be made. Decisions on these additional allocations have not yet been made.

Registered Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 30 March, *Official Report*, column *899*, what use is made of the information provided in the regular returns from registration and inspection units under the Registered Homes Act 1984; if she will place this information in the Library; and if she will place in the Library the national list of cancelled registrations.

Mr. Bowis: The statistical returns on registration under part II of the Registered Homes Act 1984 are the only source of official information on the numbers of beds in private nursing homes and hospitals. They are used widely both inside and outside the Departments to inform policy and planning. They are published annually as "Private Hospitals, Homes and Clinics Registered Under Section 23 of the Registered Homes Act 1984". Copies are placed in the Library annually.

The national list of cancelled regisrations is a confidential document made available only to health authorities and local authority social services departments. The Department's registration under the Data Protection Act precludes placing this document in the Library.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 27 April 1994

TREASURY

Inland Revenue Unit Costs

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give his best estimate of the Inland Revenue's main unit costs for dealing with the tax affairs of *(a)* employees on PAYE liable at the basic rate and the higher rate, *(b)* the self-employed and *(c)* occupational pensioners.

Mr. Dorrell: Information in the precise form requested is not available. The Inland Revenue's management plan, which will be published shortly, will give the unit costs for all schedule E taxpayer records, including PAYE taxpayer and occupational pensioners; all schedule D records, including the self-employed.

Company Cars

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) when he expects that the Inland Revenue will have issued tax codes incorporating the new company car benefit charges for 1994-95 to the majority of company car users;

(2) what proportion of tax codings issued to taxpayers by the Inland Revenue for the tax year 1994-95 have included the benefit charge for use of a company car in 1994-95 as announced in the Budget in November 1993.

Mr. Dorrell: By now, all employees and employers should have received 1994-95 PAYE codes based on the most up to date information about car benefits and other matters held by the Revenue.

Capital Gains Tax

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give *(a)* the number of cases and *(b)* the average amount of tax involved where capital gains tax was remitted because the taxpayer had left the country for each year since 1984.

Mr. Dorrell: The number of cases and the average amount of tax involved where capital gains tax was remitted because the taxpayer has left the country for each year since 1984 is as follows:

Year	*Number*	*Average amount in £*
1984	207	8,662
1985	194	7,431
1986	177	27,381
1987	177	15,506
1988	238	8,737
1989	204	10,048
1990	218	8,444
1991	345	13,401
1992	448	14,932

Figures for 1993 are not sufficiently complete to allow the necessary comparison to be made and consequently the information is not available in the form requested.

Personal Equity Plans

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the cost of tax relief on income and capital gains from shareholdings held in PEPs for the year 1996-97, assuming that the uptake of PEPs continues at its present rate and that there is no change in income or capital gains tax legislation.

Mr. Dorrell: This would depend on rates of return from PEP investments in 1996-97.

Tax Avoidance

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what additional proposals he has to reduce tax avoidance.

Mr. Dorrell: The 1994 Finance Bill contains a number of important new anti-avoidance measures which are expected to yield almost £2 billion over the next three years. The Government will be considering whether further measures will be announced in the next Budget.

Payment of Accounts

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he intends taking action to make it a criminal offence for companies deliberately to delay payment of accounts.

Mr. Portillo: The Government's consultation exercise on late payment ended on 31 March 1994. We are currently considering the responses and the Government will announce their decision in due course.

VAT

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the contribution to the change in level of imports from Europe in the first half of 1993 of evasion of value added tax following the abolition of the request for imports declared at customs.

Sir John Cope: This change provided no new opportunities for VAT evasion, so the question of assessing the amount does not arise.

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the value of VAT repayment cheques stolen in each of the last five years.

Sir John Cope: The value of VAT payable orders which have been fraudulently encashed in each of the last five years is as follows:

	£
1989-90	25,052
1990-91	161,235
1991-92	85,246
1992-93	[1]1,194,650
1993-94	20,327

[1]Includes a payable order for £1,156,806 stolen en route to Haringey borough council.

Excluding the Haringey case, £230,956 of the total of £329,704 misappropriated has been recovered.

The sums still outstanding continue to be subject to any further recovery action that is practically possible.

Import Duties

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much duty was collected on imports of *(a)* alcoholic beverages and *(b)* tobacco in the first half of 1993 and the first half of 1992; and what is his estimate of the revenue lost from the new system of recording the trade figures.

Sir John Cope: Estimates for the amount of duty paid on imported products are calculated only on an annual basis. The figures for 1992 are £1,620 million for alcoholic beverages and £620 million for tobacco. A breakdown between imports and domestic sales is not yet available for 1993. The new system of recording the trade figures has no effect on the amount of duty collected.

Mozambique

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what negotiations have been taking place between the International Monetary Fund over Mozambique.

Sir John Cope: The Mozambican authorities have recently completed discussions with IMF staff on an extension of the three-year enhanced structural adjustment fund programme which ended in 1993. They have also been negotiating an economic recovery package with the World bank. The Mozambican authorities, the fund, and the bank will now collaborate to produce a policy framework paper which will identify Mozambique's macroeconomic and structural policy objectives, Mozambique's strategy to achieve them, and the associated financing requirements, during the fourth year of its ESAF programme. The details of discussions between fund and bank staff of a member's policies are confidential to them.

Public Sector Pay

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all categories of public service employees who will receive pay rises above 1·5 per cent. in the current year; and what are the percentage rises in each case.

Mr. Portillo: The Government expect pay in the public sector in 1994-95 to be considered in accordance with the approach which my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor announced in his statement of 14 September 1993 and which he confirmed in the Budget. I expect that public sector groups will be subject to a variety of pay settlements.

Regulatory Bodies

Mr. Forman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all the regulatory bodies set up since 1979 to regulate industries or public services which have been privatised since that date; and if he will set out in each case how much it costs to run and how many people it employs.

Mr. Portillo: The relevant bodies and their planned cost and staff numbers for 1994-95 are as follows:

Organisation	*Cost (£ million)*	*Staff numbers*
Office of Telecommunications (OFTEL)	8·6	171
Office of Gas Supply (OFGAS)	4·4	63
Office of Electricity Regulation (OFFER)	10·9	234
Office of Electricity Regulation (Northern Ireland)	0·9	16
Office of Water Services (OFWAT)	9·5	150
Office of the Rail Regulator (ORR)	6·5	90

D-day Commemoration

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the involvement of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury in the appointment of Lowe Bell Communications as consultants for the D-day commemoration.

Mr. Portillo: None.

Retail Prices Index

Sir Terence Higgins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the individual components of the retail prices index; what are the prices for each item in the latest monthly survey; and what were the corresponding figures *(a)* 12 months and *(b)* 24 months earlier.

Sir John Cope: A list of the price indicators used for the retail prices index was published in the April 1993 Retail Prices Index Business Monitor MM23. A new list will be published shortly.

The purpose of the RPI is to measure price change rather than price levels. For many of the items, which are heterogeneous, the data are not suitable for the calculation of average prices.

Those average prices that can be calculated are published in the RPI Business Monitor MM23 since February 1993 and also in the *Employment Gazette.*

Edinburgh Summit

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out the assumption made at the Edinburgh summit with regard to increases in own resources related to cohesion and other aspects; and if he will set out the extent to which those assumptions have been fulfilled.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 26 April 1994]:* The Edinburgh European Council agreed the following own resources ceilings:

Own resources ceiling (percentage of European Community GNP)

Year	*Percentage*
1993	1·20
1994	1·20
1995	1·21
1996	1·22
1997	1·24
1998	1·26
1999	1·27

The own resources ceiling is an upper limit on the Community's own resources, not a target. The ceilings for 1995 to 1999 will be included in a new own resources decision, which will be put before the House for approval once a text has been agreed by the Council of Ministers.

Definitive outturn figures for the level of own resources called up for the 1993 Community budget are not yet available.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Weapons Sales

Mr. Cohen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what date the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs visited Rio; what weapons he was attempting to sell; which country he was attempting to sell them to; and which companies he was assisting.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have made no ministerial visits to Brazil.

Departmental Publications

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the President of the Board of Trade for how many regular publications he was responsible in 1993-94 or the latest year for which figures are available; what was their circulation; and how many were obtainable by subscription.

Mr. Eggar: The Department publishes a regular "Guide for Business" available free on request to United Kingdom firms with a current print run of 75,000 and the yearly "Expenditure Plans" report—DTI's annual report —which is a sale publication via Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Two regular magazines are also distributed free of charge: "Overseas Trade" with a circulation of 32,000, with copies available to exporting firms, and "Review" with a circulation of 30,000 and available to those interested in renewable energy.

A number of other annual reports, regular bulletins and newsletters on various business, energy and consumer issues are published. A comprehensive list is not held centrally but some of the main publications are listed in the "Guide for Business" and the "Expenditure Plans" report.

Company Invoices

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expect to respond to the consultation exercise on the late payment of company invoices.

Mr. McLoughlin: The late payment of commercial debt consultation concluded on 31 March 1994. A decision will be announced as soon as possible.

Departmental Laboratories and Agencies

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the level of employment in whole-time equivalents in each of his Department's laboratories and agencies in each of the last three years and at the latest available date.

Mr. Heseltine: The information requested is set out in the table.

Number of permanent staff (whole-time equivalent)

	April 1991	*April 1992*	*April 1993*	*April 1994*
Accounts Services Agency	86	88·5	88·5	91
Companies House	1,081·5	1,093	983·5	967
Insolvency Service	1,483·5	1,549	1,572·5	1,600
Laboratory of the Government Chemist	340	330·5	313·5	301
National Engineering Laboratory	389	388·5	363·5	285·5
National Physical Laboratory	827·5	808	767·5	698·5
National Weights Measures Laboratory	42·5	47·5	48	43·5
Patent Office	1,194	1,037	1,009	954
Radiocommunications Agency	501·5	517	524·5	528
Warren Spring Laboratory	310	302·5	266·5	[1a]

[1a] Warren Spring Laboratory has now merged with the Atomic Energy Authority to form the National Environmental Technology Centre. Staff in post on 1 March 1994 was 203·5.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what provisions he has made for the substantial restructuring costs indicated by his consultants' review of DTI research laboratories; and where that provision will be found in his Department's accounts.

Mr. Heseltine: Following the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) on 14 April, *Official Report*, columns *251-53*, in respect of my Department's research laboratories, the process of restructuring the Laboratory of the Government Chemist, the National Engineering Laboratory and the National Physical Laboratory has now started. The financial provision that each laboratory will require for restructuring has yet to be finalised. The relevant sums will be published in my Department's Supply Estimates class IV vote 1 in due course.

Condom Manufacture

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what effect the increase in the nominal exchange rate against the lira and the peseta since February 1993 has had on the profitability of condom manufacture in the United Kingdom; and if he will publish the increase in producer prices in terms of the ecu in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Italy and *(c)* Spain since February 1993 to the latest available date.

Mr. Heseltine: Since February 1993, the nominal exchange rate of the lira against the pound has increased by 9 per cent. and the nominal exchange rate of the peseta against the pound has increased by 22 per cent. The Department is not in a position to assess the effect of exchange rate changes on the profitability of condom manufacture in the United Kingdom. Changes in producer prices in terms of the ecu can be readily derived from "Industrial Trends Monthly Statistics", published by EuroStat, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Internal Air Flights

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to order an investigation into the fare structure and prices charged for United Kingdom internal air flights.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Such investigations are a matter for the Civil Aviation Authority, and any concerns that the hon. Member has should be referred to the authority.

Pyramid Selling

Mr. Rooker: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will amend the regulations relating to pyramid selling to encompass all companies involved in transactions away from business premises.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Pyramid Selling Schemes Regulations are irrelevant to many transactions carried out away from business premises, including sales by a company where the sales force consists of its employees.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will amend the regulations regarding pyramid selling to provide an unlimited right for participants to return goods for a full refund regardless of condition within 90 days from commencement of their business.

Mr. McLoughlin: No. Such a right would impose unwarranted compliance costs on trading which is subject to the regulations. This would put this method of trading at an unjustified competitive disadvantage.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will bring forward legislation to outlaw any business scheme of pyramid selling requiring payments purely for the benefit of registration where there is no supply of goods and services to consumers outside the scheme;

(2) if he will bring forward proposals to enable trading standards officers to be responsible for enforcement of regulations regarding pyramid selling.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have, at present, no plans to amend the Fair Trading Act 1973 in this way.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received about the limit of purchases by those involved in pyramid selling within the first seven days of business.

Mr. McLoughlin: Although this was not raised by anyone in response to our deregulation consultation over this legislation, I have since received one such representation. In addition, I have had many representations on behalf of one company that considers this limit to be ineffective in providing protection to participants.

Coal Authority

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what criteria will be used to select members of the coal authority; when he will announce members of this body; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Coal Industry Bill, which provides for the establishment of the Coal Authority, would require my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, in appointing members of the Coal Authority, to have regard to the desirability of appointing people with experience of, and who have shown capacity in, matters relevant to the authority's functions. My right hon. Friend would hope to indicate in the coming weeks who he would have it in mind to appoint in due course.

Coal Industry Pensions

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what agreement has been reached between the Government and the trustees of the British Coal pension schemes on future arrangements for pensions from these schemes after privatisation.

Mr. Eggar: Comprehensive agreements have been reached between the Government and the trustees of the mineworkers' pension scheme and the British Coal staff superannuation scheme on future arrangements for the MPS and SSS after the privatisation of British Coal. The main elements of the agreement are as follows:

(i) all pensioners and deferred pensioners of the MPS and SSS and all contributing members will be able to leave their past-service entitlements in the scheme at privatisation, if they so choose; the MPS and SSS will be closed to new members at privatisation and the new private-sector owners of the industry will not participate in the schemes;

(ii) the schemes will be given a Government solvency guarantee that will ensure that pensions and deferred pensions are increased annually after privatisation in line with the retail price index by reference to their level at privatisation; MPS and SSS beneficiaries will in addition be able to benefit from any fund surpluses through bonus enhancements over and above RPI-linked levels; surpluses after 31 March 1994, and bonus enhancements paid from them, will not be guaranteed by the Government but the Government will guarantee that, in the event of a deficiency in the MPS or SSS which results in bonus enhancements being reduced, pensions—RPI-linked pension plus bonus enhancement—will not fall in cash terms;

(iii) an investment reserve will be established in each scheme fund on which the first call will be made if a deficiency arises; the reserve will comprise British Coal's unused shares of the September 1993 surplus in the MPS and of the April 1992 surplus in the SSS; the investment reserve will therefore act as a measure of protection for bonus augmentations; the first use of any surplus following a deficiency will be to make up the investment reserve to the level that it would have been at had no deficiency payment been made;

(iv) the investment reserve will be run down over a period of not less than 25 years by transfers to the Government as guarantor; at each valuation the scheme actuary will recommend the level of reserve to be maintained, taking prudent account of total liabilities and the smooth running of fund management, and the scale of any transfer; it is likely that transfers will be skewed towards the second half of the period; and individual transfer could be spread, on the advice of the scheme actuary, over a period of three years;

(v) scheme beneficiaries and the Government as guarantor, will receive equal shares of any distributable surpluses from valuations after 31 March 1994; any share of such a surplus that becomes payable to the Government will be receivable in equal instalments over 10 years; deficiency payments due under the guarantee will also be payable over ten years;

(iv) existing obligations on British Coal to make additional contributions in respect of early and enhanced pensions will be honoured in full by the Government;

(vii) there will normally be triennial valuations of the schemes and if a valuation subsequent to a deficiency reveals a surplus, or vice versa, there will be a settling of balances before further payments by or to Government are determined, including a safeguard to ensure that beneficiaries and Government have received equal shares of any surplus distribution;

(viii) the Government will propose amendments to the Coal Industry Bill, currently under consideration in another place, which would make the Secretary of State's powers to modify the MPS and SSS subject to a time limit of two years from the commencement of the solvency guarantee and would focus the Secretary of State's powers to direct the trustees on the twin objectives of avoiding and minimising fund deficiencies and maximising the potential for fund surpluses.

The agreement will necessitate amendments to the draft modified MPS and SSS schemes and rules and draft MPS and SSS guarantee deeds that have been placed in the Library of the House.

As a result of the restructuring and closure of the MPS and SSS it will be necessary to review the schemes' investment strategy. The appropriate strategy for the modified schemes will be developed by the trustees, in consultation with Government, in the light of advice from the schemes' actuary and from their investment advisers.

The aim of the investment strategy review will be to achieve a strategy which reflects the twin objectives of minimising the risk and extent of a call on the guarantee and maximising investment returns.

I know that the MPS and SSS trustees attach particular importance to understanding how the Secretary of State might use the powers that the Coal Industry Bill would confer on him to secure that the trustees take account of the twin objectives of minimising the risk and extent of a call on the guarantee and maximising investment returns. I can assure the trustees that the Secretary of State, as guarantor, would only expect to exercise the powers conferred on him under the schemes to intervene in the day-to-day management of the scheme funds in the most exceptional circumstances. Any use of his powers would, therefore, normally only arise in the context of strategic investment policy or strategic investment decisions. He would intend only to use his powers in circumstances—which one hopes would be rare—where he considers it is necessary to do so to secure either of the twin objectives of minimising the risk and extent of calls on the guarantee or maximising surpluses. The schemes will also provide that he would, in any event, only exercise his powers after consultation with the trustees, unless in exceptional circumstances such consultation is impractical. The Secretary of State would also consult the trustees before changing the policy stated above. It may assist the trustees if I also point out that this of course does not preclude the Secretary of State having regard to other factors including the interests of beneficiaries to the extent that he considers appropriate.

There has been concern about the appointment of "Government" trustees, including the chairman, to the modified MPS and SSS. I should therefore like to confirm that the Government-appointed trustees will act as normal trustees, guided by their fiduciary duties. I should also like to make clear that future chairmen of the modified MPS and SSS will not be Crown servants or members of the schemes and will be appointed by the Secretary of State only after consultation with the respective trustees. In practice, no proposed chairman will be acceptable unless supported by a clear majority of the trustees.

I am pleased to announce that the Government intend to offer the current chairmen of the MPS and SSS, Mr. James Cowan and Sir Norman Siddall, re-appointment as chairmen for the first six months of operation of the modified schemes. I believe that their acceptance would greatly assist the transition to the new arrangements and would provide considerable reassurance to scheme members.

The arrangements outlined here concern the future of the past service pension entitlements in the MPS and SSS of employees and former employees of British Coal and its subsidiaries. The Coal Industry Bill also provides for the creation of two new industry-wide pension schemes, one following on from the MPS and one from the SSS, for the future service entitlements of employees of British Coal and it subsidiaries who are transferred to employment in successor companies. The Government's proposals for these new industry-wide schemes, including protected person status for transferred employees, are not affected by the arrangements set out in this answer.

Mr. Harold Bolter

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what position Harold Bolter currently holds for British Nuclear Fuels plc.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Yorkshire Rider

Mr. Madden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what advice he has received from the Director General of Fair Trading concerning any reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the takeover of Yorkshire Rider by Badgerline; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has not received any advice from the Director General of Fair Trading on the proposed acquisition by Badgerline of Yorkshire Rider. The DGFT's view on the information he has received is that the transaction does not appear to qualify for investigation by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission under the mergers provisions of the Fair Trading Act 1973.

Broadcasting

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the re-equipment costs, in actual and marginal terms, to the consumer of replacing existing analogue television sets and video recorders resulting from any Government decision to compel a move from analogue terrestrial television broadcasting to a digital system.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 26 April 1994]:* There has been no decision to compel a move from analogue terrestrial television broadcasting to digital systems. Neither is any form of compulsion on consumers envisaged for the future. The last precedent of a change of TV standard was the 405-line to 625-line change. This was achieved by natural replacement of television sets. Studies are being undertaken by the Radiocommunications Agency to see whether enough frequency channels exist to allow near national coverage of a digital terrestrial broadcasting service sometime in the future. This would be a prerequisite for eventually being able to switch off the analogue television networks. But in the short to medium term any move to digital terrestrial broadcasting is likely to be an opportunity both for broadcasters and viewers and not a requirement. As such there are no costs falling on consumers from compelling a move from analogue to digital. The United Kingdom network and consumer equipment market for digital video broadcasting is expected to be worth £5 billion to £10 billion over 15 years.

European Funds

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list at current prices the total amount of funds which England received from the European Union structural fund in each year since 1979.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 26 April 1994]:* There are no comprehensive figures for allocations to England from the structural funds, as the European agricultural

guidance and guarantee fund, guidance section, and parts of the European social fund are not allocated regionally. Allocations to England from the European regional development fund have been:

Year	£ million, current prices
1979	58
1980	80
1981	74
1982	114
1983	112
1984	197
1985	195
1986	190
1987	230
1988	172
1989	151
1990	208
1991	199
1992	296
1993	310

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list at current prices the total amount of funds available under each of the European structural funds for each year since 1979.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 26 April 1994]:* The total amounts allocated from each of the structural funds from 1979 to 1993 have been as follows:

Total EC structural funds allocations

Million ecu, current prices

Year	ERDF	ESF	EAGGF	Total structural funds
1979	962	775	460	2,197
1980	1,138	1,015	625	2,778
1981	1,637	996	721	3,354
1982	1,845	1,510	757	4,112
1983	2,127	1,878	866	4,871
1984	2,383	1,854	796	5,033
1985	2,495	2,189	853	5,537
1986	3,328	2,523	854	6,705
1987	3,662	3,524	941	8,127
1988	3,827	2,871	1,180	7,878
1989	4,666	3,478	1,462	9,606
1990	5,227	3,505	1,925	10,657
1991	7,162	4,787	2,640	14,589
1992	8,903	5,881	3,471	18,255
1993	10,437	6,408	3,769	20,614

Note: Greece benefited from 1981 and Spain and Portugal from 1986.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 13 April, *Official Report*, column *171*, if he will list the Community initiatives under which European funds have been made available since 1989.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 26 April 1994]:* Community structural funds initiatives launched since 1989 have been ENVIREG, INTERREG, PRISMA, RECHAR, REGEN, REGIS, STRIDE, TELEMATIQUE, LEADER, EUROFORM, NOW, HORIZON, RETEX and KONVER.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what budgets have been allocated for each of the European Community initiatives launched since 1989.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 26 April 1994]:* Allocations to each of the Community initiatives launched since 1989 have been:

Community initiatives	million ecu, 1994 prices
ENVIREG	590
INTERREG	970
PRISMA	120
RECHAR	390
REGEN	390
REGIS	280
STRIDE	480
TELEMATIQUE	240
LEADER	470
EUROFORM	300
NOW	148
HORIZON	220
RETEX	100
KONVER	130

Public Appointments

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on how many occasions he has used his power to overturn appointments recommended by the regulators of utilities or other non-elected public bodies over the last five years.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 April 1994]:* My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade does not have powers to overturn these appointments. Where regulators and others are required to consult the President of the Board of Trade, they do so, and take account of the response. The question of overturning appointments does not therefore arise.

PRIME MINISTER

State Property, Downing Street

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister (1) who maintains the inventory of state property at Downing street;

(2) who is the appointed auditor responsible as part of his duties for checking the Downing street inventory; when the inventory was last checked; and what was the result of that check.

The Prime Minister There is no single inventory of state property at No. 10. Separate inventories are maintained for differing purposes. Those responsible for maintaining them are also responsible for making periodic checks of the items against inventory. Cabinet Office internal auditors are free to check the inventories at any time they wish.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Civil Servants (Dismissal)

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many civil servants who have been the subject of adverse published reports have been dismissed during the past 12 months.

Mr. David Davis: Civil servants, like other employees, can be dismissed only if personal culpability is established

in the course of properly constituted disciplinary or criminal proceedings. A number of such proceedings have resulted in dismissal during the last 12 months, although details are not held centrally and I am not aware of any such civil servants who have been named in adverse published reports.

Forward Look

Mrs. Browning: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when the first Forward Look of Government-funded science, engineering and technology will be published.

Mr. Waldegrave: The first Forward Look of Government-funded science, engineering and technology is being published today. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses. I am also placing in the Libraries copies of the advice we have received from outside bodies on the Forward Look.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Leytonstone Fire Station

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will clarify the London fire and civil defence authority's proposals for reducing the effect of diesel exhaust emissions from fire appliances turning out from Leytonstone fire station on that fire station's personnel.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I am informed by the chief fire officer that provision has been made in the minor improvements programme for 1994-95 for the staircase at Leytonstone fire station to be altered and enclosed.

Police Authorities

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state by police authority in England *(a)* the cost of police per unit D of council tax, *(b)* the number of police per square mile and *(c)* expenditure per head of population.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is given in the table. Police coverage by area is normally expressed as hectares per officer.

Cost of police per unit D of council tax, hectares covered per police officer and expenditure on the police per head of population

Police force	*Cost per unit D of council tax*[1] *(£)*	*Hectares covered per officer*[2]	*Expenditure per head of population*[3] *(£)*
Avon and Somerset	263	155	90
Bedfordshire	268	105	89
Cambridgeshire	265	275	86
Cheshire	245	121	83
Cleveland	395	39	113
Cumbria	317	574	103
Derbyshire	273	142	85
Devon and Cornwall	254	351	89
Dorset	238	204	91
Durham	330	175	92
Essex	254	122	91
Gloucestershire	273	223	98
Greater Manchester	397	18	116
Hampshire	236	127	83
Hertfordshire	223	88	87
Humberside	347	173	100
Kent	273	119	98
Lancashire	325	95	99
Leicestershire	270	138	83
Lincolnshire	290	490	91
Merseyside	494	14	139
Norfolk	248	371	82
Northamptonshire	300	199	94
Northumbria	363	154	104
North Yorkshire	246	586	87
Nottinghamshire	324	92	96
South Yorkshire	345	51	96
Staffordshire	283	123	87
Suffolk	247	308	82
Surrey	229	88	98
Sussex	219	126	85
Thames Valley	241	151	90
Warwickshire	275	194	97
West Mercia	235	361	80
West Midlands	397	13	113
West Yorkshire	382	39	111
Wiltshire	273	295	97
City of London	19,979	0·34	12,772
Metropolitan	522	7	207

[1] Based on estimated expenditure for 1993-94 and 1993-94 taxbase.
[2] Based on police force establishment at 31 December 1993.
[3] Based on estimated expenditure for 1993-94 and population as at June 1992.

Prison Sentences

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to require criminals convicted of murder or serious physical offences against police officers to be sentenced to a fixed period of imprisonment to which only special limited rules of remission would apply; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Life imprisonment is already the mandatory sentence for murder of a police officer. There are no plans to introduce mandatory sentences for other offences committed against police officers or to introduce special release arrangements for offenders convicted of such offences.

Physical Restraints

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the prison governor and doctor are always informed when a prisoner is put into physical restraint; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 27 April 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about prisoners put into physical restraints. In a prison, if a prisoner is put into physical restraints, other than the temporary application of ratchet handcuffs, the governor and medical officer must be informed.

Where a prisoner is escorted outside the prison, for example to attend court, the medical officer need not be told if handcuffs are to be used, since it is the normal presumption that they will be used. If any other form of restraint is to be used outside the prison, the medical officer must be informed.

Police Officers

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female officers there were in each constabulary and at each rank per constabulary in England and Wales in (i) 1980, (ii) 1985, (iii) 1990 and (iv) 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information for 1990 and 1993 is provided in tables 1 and 2. Information for 1980 and 1985 in the form requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Tables 3 and 4 show police strength by rank for those years. Information on overall proportions of male and female officers in each force is contained in the annual reports of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, copies of which are in the Library.

Table 1
Police service in England and Wales
Strength for ordinary duty return for 31 December 1990
Male ranks

Police force name	Chief Constable	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief	Chief Superintendent	Superintendent	Chief Inspector	Inspector	Sergeant	Constable	Total male ranks	Total police ranks
Avon and Somerset	1	1	3	13	38	67	149	463	2,034	2,769	3,059
Bedfordshire	1	1	1	5	15	20	50	138	689	920	1,064
Cambridgeshire	1	1	1	5	12	24	59	189	772	1,064	1,186
Cheshire	1	1	2	6	22	33	105	270	1,235	1,675	1,898
City of London	1	1	1	6	11	20	53	118	494	705	796
Cleveland	1	1	2	6	17	26	86	230	959	1,328	1,485
Cumbria	1	1	1	7	19	24	69	188	749	1,059	1,189
Derbyshire	1	1	2	7	25	33	92	251	1,155	1,567	1,751
Devon and Cornwall	1	1	2	13	35	47	131	446	1,910	2,586	2,867
Dorset	1	1	1	5	16	22	69	187	826	1,128	1,272
Durham	1	1	2	4	17	28	78	209	913	1,253	1,364
Essex	1	1	3	11	31	59	122	423	1,911	2,562	2,884
Gloucestershire	1	1	1	6	14	20	56	165	786	1,050	1,158
Greater Manchester	1	1	6	26	92	127	395	1,024	4,458	6,130	7,010
Hampshire	1	1	3	11	36	53	132	466	2,146	2,849	3,170
Hertfordshire	1	1	2	7	22	31	87	240	1,032	1,423	1,659
Humberside	1	1	2	8	23	36	106	312	1,341	1,830	1,989
Kent	1	1	3	12	36	46	171	413	1,934	2,617	2,988
Lancashire	1	1	3	13	39	72	159	507	2,065	2,860	3,199
Leicestershire	1	1	1	7	22	30	102	274	1,141	1,579	1,784
Lincolnshire	1	1	0	4	10	24	64	194	788	1,086	1,205
Merseyside	1	1	3	18	60	79	256	727	2,967	4,112	4,679
Metropolitan Police	6	14	31	153	249	502	1,428	4,181	18,046	24,610	28,152
Norfolk	1	1	1	6	17	22	65	194	972	1,279	1,394
Northamptonshire	1	1	1	6	13	22	71	165	752	1,032	1,144
Northumbria	1	1	3	13	49	61	189	508	2,361	3,186	3,528
North Yorkshire	1	1	2	7	14	25	76	203	917	1,246	1,379
Nottinghamshire	1	1	2	8	28	32	128	329	1,604	2,133	2,342
South Yorkshire	1	1	3	11	38	43	163	440	1,964	2,664	2,984
Staffordshire	1	1	2	11	31	49	121	328	1,367	1,911	2,193
Suffolk	1	1	1	6	17	18	56	177	795	1,072	1,195
Surrey	1	1	2	7	22	24	90	244	1,055	1,446	1,654
Sussex	1	1	3	10	32	39	175	441	1,984	2,686	2,984
Thames Valley	1	1	3	11	35	47	174	481	2,461	3,214	3,706
Warwickshire	1	1	0	5	14	16	61	155	651	904	1,014
West Mercia	1	1	2	11	27	40	126	290	1,277	1,775	2,022
West Midlands	1	1	4	25	78	118	375	1,034	4,256	5,892	6,881
West Yorkshire	1	1	5	19	69	79	279	793	3,416	4,662	5,276
Wiltshire	1	1	1	6	16	24	58	182	752	1,041	1,157
Dyfed Powys	1	1	1	7	13	21	36	152	615	847	936
Gwent	1	1	1	5	14	17	46	154	668	907	1,001
North Wales	1	1	2	7	25	27	66	203	868	1,200	1,339
South Wales	1	1	3	14	39	62	175	528	2,028	2,851	3,123
Total all forces	48	56	118	548	1,452	2,209	6,549	18,616	81,114	110,710	125,060

Police service in England and Wales
Strength for ordinary duty return for 31 December 1990
Female ranks

Police force name	Chief Constable	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief	Chief Superintendent	Superintendent	Chief Inspector	Inspector	Sergeant	Constable	Total female ranks	Total police ranks
Avon and Somerset	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	12	273	290	3,059
Bedfordshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	8	132	144	1,064
Cambridgeshire	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	5	115	122	1,186
Cheshire	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	22	196	223	1,898
City of London	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	10	78	91	796
Cleveland	0	0	0	0	1	1	8	7	140	157	1,485
Cumbria	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	125	130	1,189
Derbyshire	0	0	0	0	1	2	8	6	167	184	1,751
Devon and Cornwall	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	14	263	281	2,867
Dorset	0	0	0	1	1	0	3	7	132	144	1,272
Durham	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	4	105	111	1,364
Essex	0	0	0	0	1	0	7	23	291	322	2,884
Gloucestershire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	105	108	1,158
Greater Manchester	0	0	0	1	0	4	13	47	815	880	7,010
Hampshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	12	305	321	3,170

Police force name	Chief Constable	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief	Chief Superintendent	Superintendent	Chief Inspector	Inspector	Sergeant	Constable	Total female ranks	Total police ranks
Hertfordshire	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	11	222	236	1,659
Humberside	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	6	149	159	1,989
Kent	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	21	345	371	2,988
Lancashire	0	0	0	0	1	2	6	17	313	339	3,199
Leicestershire	0	0	0	0	0	2	5	13	185	205	1,784
Lincolnshire	0	0	0	0	1	1	4	4	109	119	1,205
Merseyside	0	0	1	0	3	2	6	36	519	567	4,679
Metropolitan Police	0	0	0	3	8	13	29	261	3,228	3,542	28,152
Norfolk	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	7	106	115	1,394
Northamptonshire	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	107	112	1,144
Northumbria	0	0	0	0	1	2	4	16	319	342	3,528
North Yorkshire	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	10	121	133	1,379
Nottinghamshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	9	198	209	2,342
South Yorkshire	0	0	0	0	0	3	4	13	300	320	2,984
Staffordshire	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	14	265	282	2,193
Suffolk	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	5	115	123	1,195
Surrey	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	12	194	208	1,654
Sussex	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	19	276	298	2,984
Thames Valley	0	0	0	1	3	1	4	21	462	492	3,706
Warwickshire	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	3	103	110	1,014
West Mercia	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	11	233	247	2,022
West Midlands	0	0	0	1	2	1	15	58	912	989	6,881
West Yorkshire	0	0	0	1	0	2	10	27	574	614	5,276
Wiltshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	7	107	116	1,157
Dyfed Powys	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	85	89	936
Gwent	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	4	87	94	1,001
North Wales	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	8	129	139	1,339
South Wales	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	15	253	272	3,123
Total all forces	0	0	1	9	30	52	181	819	13,258	14,350	125,060

Table 2
Police service in England and Wales
Strength for ordinary duty return for 31 December 1993
Male ranks

Police force name	Chief Constable	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief	Chief Superintendent	Superintendent	Chief Inspector	Inspector	Sergeant	Constable	Total male ranks	Total police ranks
Avon and Somerset	1	1	3	9	29	51	159	452	1,993	2,698	3,03
Bedfordshire	1	1	1	4	13	15	56	148	754	993	1,168
Cambridgeshire	1	1	1	2	13	23	60	189	823	1,113	1,266
Cheshire	1	1	1	4	19	29	104	269	1,219	1,647	1,873
City of London	0	1	0	5	9	18	54	124	556	767	884
Cleveland	1	1	2	0	11	20	83	204	926	1,248	1,414
Cumbria	1	1	1	6	15	21	70	182	734	1,031	1,185
Derbyshire	1	1	2	5	21	30	92	258	1,171	1,581	1,790
Devon and Cornwall	1	1	3	9	37	47	134	444	1,879	2,555	2,908
Dorset	1	1	1	6	17	24	70	191	821	1,132	1,292
Durham	1	1	1	5	16	20	76	208	906	1,234	1,389
Essex	1	0	3	10	31	53	131	431	1,888	2,548	2,947
Gloucestershire	1	1	1	4	11	22	57	161	746	1,004	1,140
Greater Manchester	1	1	5	22	76	112	403	996	4,443	6,059	7,047
Hampshire	1	1	3	5	37	42	143	484	2,132	2,848	3,270
Hertfordshire	1	1	2	5	20	32	87	236	1,033	1,417	1,679
Humberside	1	1	2	8	15	35	98	290	1,362	1,812	2,028
Kent	1	1	3	10	26	45	178	420	2,034	2,718	3,182
Lancashire	1	1	3	9	34	63	165	484	1,977	2,737	3,140
Leicestershire	1	1	1	6	17	25	103	267	1,169	1,590	1,838
Lincolnshire	1	0	1	4	12	19	62	185	779	1,063	1,203
Merseyside	1	1	3	17	58	71	252	705	2,904	4,012	4,663
Metropolitan Police	5	13	28	113	212	452	1,362	4,262	17,286	23,733	27,605
Norfolk	1	1	1	5	14	23	65	203	970	1,283	1,434
Northamptonshire	1	1	1	4	14	22	68	161	772	1,044	1,181
Northumbria	1	1	2	10	36	57	168	500	2,402	3,177	3,589
North Yorkshire	1	0	2	4	11	23	69	195	876	1,181	1,333
Nottinghamshire	1	1	2	6	24	27	123	323	1,549	2,056	2,337
South Yorkshire	1	1	3	12	35	43	160	430	1,945	2,630	3,015
Staffordshire	1	1	2	8	23	40	117	330	1,352	1,874	2,202
Suffolk	1	1	1	5	16	18	63	178	779	1,062	1,216
Surrey	1	1	1	6	19	18	82	249	1,062	1,439	1,667
Sussex	1	1	2	6	28	36	172	430	1,952	2,628	2,977
Thames Valley	1	1	2	9	35	43	185	486	2,565	3,327	3,894
Warwickshire	1	1	1	3	14	16	55	152	641	884	1,025
West Mercia	1	1	2	7	24	36	128	284	1,308	1,791	2,056
West Midlands	1	1	4	20	76	95	363	978	4,295	5,833	6,968
West Yorkshire	1	1	4	8	49	70	258	728	3,227	4,346	4,988
Wiltshire	1	1	1	5	11	20	65	185	825	1,114	1,273
Dyfed Powys	1	1	1	3	13	20	41	150	617	847	966
Gwent	0	1	1	4	11	14	44	149	649	873	989
North Wales	1	1	1	7	21	26	67	215	845	1,184	1,341
South Wales	1	1	3	7	32	51	165	496	2,098	2,854	3,142

Police force name	Chief Constable	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief	Chief Superintendent	Superintendent	Chief Inspector	Inspector	Sergeant	Constable	Total male ranks	Total police ranks
Total all forces	45	52	108	407	1,255	1,967	6,457	18,412	80,264	108,967	125,538

Police service in England and Wales
Strength for ordinary duty return for 31 December 1993
Female ranks

Police force name	Chief Constable	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief	Chief Superintendent	Superintendent	Chief Inspector	Inspector	Sergeant	Constable	Total female ranks	Total police ranks
Avon and Somerset	0	0	0	0	1	1	5	17	312	336	3,034
Bedfordshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	11	159	175	1,168
Cambridgeshire	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	10	141	153	1,266
Cheshire	0	0	0	0	1	1	4	24	196	226	1,873
City of London	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	6	105	117	884
Cleveland	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	12	148	166	1,414
Cumbria	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	5	147	154	1,185
Derbyshire	0	0	0	0	1	2	4	7	195	209	1,790
Devon and Cornwall	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	19	328	353	2,908
Dorset	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	12	145	160	1,292
Durham	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	7	146	155	1,389
Essex	0	0	0	0	1	0	11	23	364	399	2,947
Gloucestershire	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	7	128	136	1,140
Greater Manchester	0	0	0	1	2	4	17	65	899	988	7,047
Hampshire	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	19	396	422	3,270
Hertfordshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	13	247	262	1,679
Humberside	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	11	203	216	2,028
Kent	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	36	423	464	3,182
Lancashire	0	0	0	0	1	1	7	24	370	403	3,140
Leicestershire	0	0	1	0	1	2	4	14	226	248	1,838
Lincolnshire	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	10	125	140	1,203
Merseyside	0	0	1	0	2	3	11	53	581	651	4,663
Metropolitan Police	0	0	0	4	7	8	39	297	3,517	3,872	27,605
Norfolk	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	7	141	151	1,434
Northamptonshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	7	128	137	1,181
Northumbria	0	0	0	0	0	3	7	16	386	412	3,589
North Yorkshire	0	0	0	0	1	0	4	4	143	152	1,333
Nottinghamshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	9	267	281	2,337
South Yorkshire	0	0	0	0	2	3	1	25	354	385	3,015
Staffordshire	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	12	311	328	2,202
Suffolk	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	7	144	154	1,216
Surrey	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	19	204	228	1,667
Sussex	0	0	1	0	1	0	3	32	312	349	2,977
Thames Valley	0	0	0	2	3	2	8	30	522	567	3,894
Warwickshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	135	141	1,025
West Mercia	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	17	245	265	2,056
West Midlands	0	0	0	1	1	4	20	76	1,033	1,135	6,968
West Yorkshire	0	0	0	1	0	3	13	28	597	642	4,988
Wiltshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	9	146	159	1,273
Dyfed Powys	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	112	119	966
Gwent	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	5	108	116	989
North Wales	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	7	146	157	1,341
South Wales	0	0	0	1	0	0	4	23	260	288	3,142
Total all forces	0	0	3	11	27	54	237	1,044	15,195	16,571	125,538

Police Service strength by rank in England and Wales as at 31 December 1980

Police Force	Chief Constable	Deputy Chief Constable	Assistant Chief Constable	Chief Superintendent	Superintendents	Chief Inspector	Inspector	Sergeant	Constable	Totals
Avon and Somerset	1	1	3	13	38	70	148	465	2,223	2,962
Bedfordshire	1	1	1	5	15	17	51	140	732	963
Cambridgeshire	1	1	1	5	15	24	52	177	810	1,086
Cheshire	1	1	2	8	22	31	105	282	1,381	1,833
Cleveland	1	1	2	7	20	28	89	229	1,077	1,454
Cumbria	1	1	1	7	17	24	69	172	812	1,104
Derbyshire	1	1	2	8	28	34	101	254	1,403	1,832
Devon and Cornwall	1	1	3	15	32	56	134	444	2,035	2,721
Dorset	1	—	1	5	14	22	61	179	884	1,167
Durham	1	1	2	8	19	29	69	208	1,008	1,345
Dyfed Powys	1	1	1	7	10	25	36	155	693	929
Essex	1	1	3	11	28	60	113	416	1,976	2,609
Gloucestershire	1	1	1	6	14	20	57	170	849	1,119
Greater Manchester	1	1	6	29	93	150	421	1,083	5,139	6,923
Gwent	1	1	1	6	10	22	14	147	741	973
Hampshire	1	1	3	14	30	65	127	433	2,384	3,058
Hertfordshire	1	1	2	9	22	31	82	246	1,124	1,518

Police Force	Chief Constable	Deputy Chief Constable	Assistant Chief Constable	Chief Superintendent	Superintendent	Chief Inspector	Inspector	Sergeant	Constable	Totals
Humberside	1	1	2	10	27	38	103	315	1,454	1,951
Kent	1	1	4	11	33	54	167	418	2,182	2,871
Lancashire	1	1	4	16	44	70	159	513	2,312	3,120
Leicestershire	1	1	2	7	25	36	91	282	1,275	1,720
Lincolnshire	1	1	2	7	15	29	63	181	884	1,183
Merseyside	1	1	5	20	61	72	234	709	3,488	4,591
Norfolk	1	1	1	7	15	25	65	191	943	1,249
Northamptonshire	1	1	1	7	12	25	54	149	722	971
Northumbria	1	1	3	13	50	60	190	504	2,518	3,340
North Wales	1	1	1	7	18	29	62	205	966	1,290
North Yorkshire	1	1	2	7	18	30	80	201	1,012	1,352
Nottinghamshire	1	1	2	9	35	42	132	319	1,668	2,209
South Wales	1	1	2	13	42	62	179	521	2,247	3,068
South Yorkshire	1	1	3	11	38	44	150	428	2,166	2,842
Staffordshire	1	1	2	10	26	46	102	329	1,554	2,071
Suffolk	1	1	1	5	11	28	55	165	855	1,122
Surrey	1	—	2	7	22	29	78	245	1,205	1,589
Sussex	1	1	3	13	39	44	155	460	2,107	2,823
Thames Valley	1	1	3	12	41	63	139	460	2,323	3,043
Warwickshire	1	1	1	6	12	19	56	140	680	916
West Mercia	1	1	2	10	30	38	119	268	1,470	1,939
West Midlands	1	1	6	20	80	111	355	1,019	4,946	6,539
West Yorkshire	1	1	6	26	71	88	287	808	3,752	5,040
Wiltshire	1	1	1	6	11	23	48	148	793	1,032
City of London	[1]1	[2]1	[3]1	7	12	18	61	141	601	843
Metropolitan	[1]6	[2]16	[3]54	193	219	431	1,236	3,789	17,618	23,562
TOTALS	47	56	151	623	1,434	2,262	6,179	18,108	87,012	115,872

[1]Includes ranks of assistant commissioner and above in Metropolitan police, and commissioner in City of London police.
[2]Includes deputy assistant commissioner in Metropolitan police, and assistant commissioner in City of London police.
[3]Includes commanders in Metropolitan police and City of London police.

Table 4

Police service strength by rank in England and Wales as at 31 December 1985

Police force	Chief Constable	Deputy Chief Constable	Assistant Chief Constable	Chief Superintendent	Superintendent	Chief Inspector	Inspector	Sergeant	Constable	Totals
Avon and Somerset	1	1	3	13	38	69	152	464	2,224	2,965
Bedfordshire	1	—	1	5	15	19	52	139	750	982
Cambridgeshire	1	1	1	5	14	25	57	182	855	1,141
Cheshire	1	1	2	8	22	28	103	279	1,359	1,803
Cleveland	1	1	2	6	19	27	93	235	1,077	1,461
Cumbria	1	1	1	7	17	25	71	173	824	1,120
Derbyshire	1	—	1	8	26	37	102	258	1,332	1,765
Devon and Cornwall	1	1	3	13	36	49	133	431	2,080	2,747
Dorset	1	1	1	6	17	22	66	177	911	1,202
Durham	1	1	2	8	19	27	76	212	947	1,293
Dyfed Powys	1	1	1	7	12	24	34	153	691	924
Essex	1	1	3	11	28	60	121	427	2,026	2,678
Gloucestershire	1	1	1	6	15	18	58	174	877	1,151
Greater Manchester	1	1	6	28	93	135	405	1,064	5,046	6,779
Gwent	1	1	1	4	14	15	49	143	743	971
Hampshire	1	1	3	12	31	56	126	437	2,401	3,068
Hertfordshire	1	1	2	9	25	32	93	254	1,167	1,584
Humberside	1	1	1	8	24	38	107	319	1,437	1,936
Kent	1	1	3	12	33	48	176	427	2,158	2,859
Lancashire	1	1	4	10	42	66	156	513	2,211	3,004
Leicestershire	1	1	2	7	24	36	98	282	1,299	1,750
Lincolnshire	1	1	1	5	12	22	66	179	854	1,141
Merseyside	1	1	3	19	61	77	248	739	3,405	4,554
Norfolk	1	1	1	7	16	21	68	195	953	1,263
Northamptonshire	1	—	1	6	13	22	61	152	761	1,017
Northumbria	1	1	3	14	49	62	193	505	2,540	3,368
North Wales	1	1	1	7	21	27	65	210	918	1,251
North Yorkshire	1	1	2	7	17	29	77	205	1,014	1,353
Nottinghamshire	1	—	2	8	33	31	125	320	1,694	2,214
South Wales	1	1	2	13	43	63	182	526	2,233	3,064
South Yorkshire	1	1	3	11	37	44	160	446	2,147	2,850
Staffordshire	1	1	2	11	30	48	116	329	1,564	2,102
Suffolk	1	1	1	6	18	20	56	174	854	1,131
Surrey	1	1	2	7	23	26	92	244	1,231	1,627
Sussex	1	1	2	12	37	42	160	420	2,115	2,790
Thames Valley	1	1	2	13	41	57	166	464	2,538	3,283
Warwickshire	1	1	1	5	15	17	62	139	698	939
West Mercia	1	1	2	10	30	39	128	298	1,415	1,924
West Midlands	1	1	6	21	78	120	364	1,043	4,921	6,555
West Yorkshire	1	1	4	22	69	87	284	810	3,771	5,049
Wiltshire	1	1	1	6	15	20	54	157	773	1,028

Police force	Chief Constable	Deputy Chief Constable	Assistant Chief Constable	Chief Superintendent	Superintendent	Chief Inspector	Inspector	Sergeant	Constable	Totals
City of London	[1]1	[2]1	[3]1	6	11	19	56	129	558	782
Metropolitan	[1]6	[2]17	[3]40	185	249	491	1,398	4,387	19,886	26,659
Totals	48	55	127	594	1,482	2,240	6,509	18,814	89,258	119,127

[1] Includes ranks of assistant commissioner and above in Metropolitan police, and commissioner in City of London police.
[2] Includes deputy assistant commissioner in Metropolitan police, and assistant commissioner in City of London police.
[3] Includes commanders in Metropolitan police and City of London police.

Departmental Publications

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for how many regular publications he was responsible in 1993-94; what was their circulation; and how many were obtainable by subscription.

Mr. Howard: There are around 60 such publications, details of which are included in the Home Office annual report 1994, Cm 2508, pages 95-101, available in the Library of the House. No central record is maintained of the circulation of these publications, but all regular publications may be obtained on standing order from the Home Office or from Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Crime Statistics, Wales

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many reported instances of crime there were in Wales in 1993; what percentage this represents of the same statistic for each of the five preceding years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Information on notifiable offences recorded by the police in Wales is given in the table.

Notifiable offences recorded by the police in Wales

Year	Number of offences	Percentage change over previous year
1988	196,457	+1
1989	195,885	—
1990	229,248	+17
1991	271,038	+18
1992	287,258	+6
1993	279,018	−3

Prisons Ombudsman

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what recruitment procedures were followed leading to the appointment of Sir Peter Woodward as the prisons ombudsman;

(2) what will be the remit and powers of the prisons ombudsman; and if he will publish his job description;

(3) how many staff will be appointed to the office of the prisons ombudsman;

(4) what training his Department will provide for the prisons ombudsman and his staff.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The recruitment of the prisons ombudsman was conducted by the Civil Service Commission, using public advertisement and an executive search agency.

Sir Peter Woodhead will consider grievances from prisoners who have failed to obtain satisfaction from the Prison Service's internal complaints system, and he will, where necessary, make recommendations to the Director General of the Prison Service or to the Home Secretary. His full job description was published when the post was advertised and a copy is available in the Library.

The prisons ombudsman will be supported by 12 staff, including three assistant ombudsmen. An induction programme will be arranged to include visits to prisons and consultations with Prison Service staff.

Prison Statistics

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his Department plans to publish information on the reconviction of people released from custody, as stated in "Prison Statistics England and Wales 1991" Cm 2157.

Mr. Maclean: The main reconviction results for prisoners discharged in 1987 were given in my reply to the hon. Member on 18 October 1993 at column *133*. A full analysis of the results will be published shortly.

Prison (Indiscipline)

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many concerted acts of indiscipline have taken place at each prison in England and Wales in each of the 12 months to March.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 27 April 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question asking how many concerted acts of indiscipline have taken at each prison in England and Wales in each of the 12 months to March 1994.

The information is given in the attached table.

Concerted Acts of Indiscipline

	1993									1994			
	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	Total
Acklington	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	2
Belmarsh	2	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	3	7
Birmingham	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Blakenhurst	—	—	—	—	1	2	2	—	1	—	2	—	8
Bristol	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Bullingdon	6	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	1	—	—	2	11

	1993									1994			
	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	Total
Canterbury	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Channings WD	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Chelmsford	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	2
Dartmoor	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
Dorchester	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Elmley	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	2
Erlestoke	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	3
Everthorpe	—	—	1	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	3
Exeter	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Featherstone	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
Frankland	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1
Full Sutton	—	—	1	1	1	—	2	—	—	1	—	1	7
Garth	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Glen Parva	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	2
Gloucester	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	2
Haslar	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Haverigg	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	2
Highdown	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	2
Highpoint	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	2
Holloway	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
Holme House	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
Hull	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	1	2	—	—	—	5
Lancaster Farms	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	2
Lindholme	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	1	—	—	3
Long Lartin	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	3
Low Newton	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Manchester	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
The Mount	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Northallerton	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1
Nottingham	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1
Parkhurst	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	2
Portland	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1
Preston	3	2	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6
Pucklechurch	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Risley	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	4
Rochester	—	—	1	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	3
Shepton Mallet	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Shrewsbury	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Stoke Heath	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
Standford Hill	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Styal	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Swaleside	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	2
The Verne	—	—	1	—	—	4	—	—	2	—	1	2	10
Wayland	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	3
Wetherby	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Whitemoor	1	1	1	2	—	1	—	—	2	1	2	—	11
Winchester	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1
The Wolds	—	1	1	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	4
Woodhill	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Wormwood Scrubs	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1
Wymott	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Total	18	10	18	7	8	18	15	9	14	10	10	10	147

Young Homeless

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to offer revised guidance concerning checks on those who provide emergency accommodation for the homeless in respect of the effect of the Children Act 1989 on the accommodation of those aged 16 and 17 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None. There is no statutory requirement for police checks to be carried out on those caring for children and the Children Act 1989 made no change to the statutory position.

Immigration (Yugoslavia and Somalia)

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many individuals from Somalia have been granted visas to enter Britain as students since January 1991; and in how many instances a time limit has been set on their right to remain in Britain;

(2) how many individuals from Somalia have been granted visas to enter Britain as visitors since January 1991; and in how many instances a time limit has been set on their right to remain in Britain;

(3) how many individuals from the former Yugoslavia have been granted visas to enter Britain as visitors since January 1991; and in how many instances a time limit has been set on their right to remain in Britain;

(4) how many individuals from the former Yugoslavia have been granted visas to enter Britain as students since January 1991; and in how many instances a time limit has been set on their right to remain in Britain.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The available information relates to nationals of Somalia and the former Yugoslavia given leave to enter the United Kingdom as visitors and students, and is given in the table. Visitors are admitted for a period not exceeding six months. Students can be admitted for a longer specific period depending on their course of study.

Nationals of Somalia and the former Yugoslavia given leave to enter the United Kingdom as visitors and students

Number of journeys

Nationality/category	*1991*	*1992*	*[1]1993*
Somalia:			
visitors	1,340	1,080	1,370
students	20	40	30
Former Yugoslavia:			
visitors	40,900	32,000	26,400
students	4,920	2,080	3,430

[1] Figures are provisional.

Probation Officers

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to review the recruitment and qualifying training of probation officers.

Mr. Maclean: A review of the recruitment and qualifying training of probation officers will begin on 3 May. It will be carried out by Miss Vivienne Dews.

The terms of reference are as follows:

Having regard to the probation service statement of purpose, responsibilities and operational goals; the Government's public spending plans and the likely future recruitment needs of the probation service; the competences appropriate for different grades of probation service staff; the need to secure maximum value for money from Home Office expenditure on or in connection with the probation service; the need to secure equality of opportunity for entry to the service; and relevant developments in higher education and vocational training generally;

(a) to review the present qualification requirements governing appointment as a probation officer, and to consider how they might be changed and entry routes into the service enlarged in order to attract those with relevant experiences while maintaining a skilled and balanced workforce; and

(b) in the light of *(a)* to review the present scheme for Home Office sponsorship of students undertaking qualifying training and to consider the extent to which and alternative methods by which funding should support probation service qualifying training.

Independent Monitor (Immigration)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when a report will be made available of the work done by the independent monitor appointed by him under section 3AA of the Immigration Act 1971, as amended by section 10 of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have been asked to reply.

This is a matter for Lady Anson, who must make her report by 30 November of this year.

EMPLOYMENT

Jobcentres

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will state the annual rent of the jobcentre at Barnsley and the jobcentre at Wakefield occupied on 5 October 1992 and 19 July 1993.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. Fogden to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 April 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the annual rents of the Jobcentres at Barnsley and Wakefield.

The annual rent of the Barnsley Jobcentre at 15 October 1992 was £237,133.

The annual rent of the Wakefield Jobcentre at 19 July 1993 was £175,770.

I hope this is helpful.

HIV

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions he or his ministerial colleagues have had with officials representing any retail establishments, regarding the legal and ethical considerations of screening for the HIV virus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Employment Ministers have had no such discussions. The Department's policy is set out in our booklet "AIDS and the Work Place—A guide for employers", a copy of which has been placed in the Library. There is no risk to fellow workers or the public from normal work contact—for example, in retail establishments—with an HIV-infected person.

Advisers

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* claimant advisers and *(b)* new client advisers were in post for each year since these posts were established.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 26 April 1994]:* Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. Fogden to Mr. Frank Field, dated 27 April 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question on the number of Claimant Advisers and New Client Advisers employed by Employment Services (ES) since the introduction of these posts.

Our records only go back to the launch of the ES as an Agency in 1990 and the available information is shown below:—

	New client advisers	*Claimant advisers*
1990-91	2,121	2,803
1991-92	2,529	3,372
1992-93	3,594	3,122
1993-94	3,288	3,139

The fluctuations, year on year, are due to two main factors. First, the number of clients who attend our offices affects the number of advisers needed to help them; secondly, changes to the nature of advisory work itself—for instance, the introduction of the new Unified Advisory Service in 92/93—result in variations in the number of staff required.

I hope this is helpful.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Agency

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many letters sent by Mr. Simon Godfrey of Warwick in recent months have been lost by the Hastings office of the Child Support Agency; and how many of them were sent by recorded delivery and had been signed for by CSA staff;

(2) how many complaints about lost correspondence have been received by the Child Support Agency since it began operations; and how many of those letters had been sent by recorded delivery.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Sir Dudley Smith, dated 27 April 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security about lost correspondence, particularly in relation to Mr. Simon Godfrey of Warwick.

Mr. Godfrey wrote to the Child Support Agency Centre at Hastings requesting a review of his maintenance assessment. He was mistakenly informed that this, and a number of subsequent letters, had not been received. The appeals and review manager at the Hastings Centre has written to Mr. Godfrey apologising for the mistake and answering the concerns raised in his letters.

I hope you will convey to Mr. Godfrey my sincere apologies for the errors made in his case.

You also asked about the number of complaints the Agency has received about lost correspondence. I am sorry that the Agency does not collect information in the form requested.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many non-resident parents so far assessed for maintenance by the Child Support Agency are on income support.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive of the Child Support Agency, to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) on 22 April at column *71*.

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) to what extent the income of the partner and stepchildren of the father of children of a previous relationship is taken into account by the Child Support Agency when a maintenance assessment is made;

(2) why the income of the partner and stepchildren of a woman applicant is not taken into account by the Child Benefit Agency when a maintenance assessment is made in respect of her former husband or partner.

Mr. Burt: Child maintenance assessments are made by the Child Support Agency, using a formula which applies irrespective of whether the father or the mother is the absent parent.

The agency needs details of the income of an absent parent's new partner for two reasons: first, to assess whether the partner can afford to contribute towards the upkeep of his or her own children of the new relationship, or whether the costs of those children should be allowed in full in the absent parent's exempt income; secondly, to determine whether the amount of maintenance the absent parent has been assessed to pay should in fact be reduced, under the protected income provisions. Protected income is calculated for the whole family, so a stepchild's income is taken into account up to the amount included in that calculation for his or her personal needs.

Where the parent with care can afford to contribute to the upkeep of a child of the previous relationship, the absent parent's maintenance payments may be reduced. Since parents with care do not make payments, no protected income calculation is necessary in respect of their new family. But a partner's income is taken into account where he or she can contribute to the upkeep of children of the new relationship.

Benefits Agency Applications

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many cases there were of applicants to the Benefits Agency seeking help with funeral bills in Scotland in 1993; and of these how many were refused on the grounds that the applicant already had repayments to make for a social fund loan or loans.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mrs. Maria Fyfe, dated 26 April 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about requests for help with funeral bills in Scotland in 1993.

I should explain that help with funeral bills can be provided from the Social Fund (SF) in the form of a Funeral Payment (FP). Applications for SF FPs are recorded when a decision (an award or refusal) is made. The number of decisions made in Scotland for the financial year 1993-94 was 11,395.

With regard to the number of FP claims refused on the grounds that the customer was already repaying a SF loan, I should point out that the SF scheme is made up of two distinct and separate parts. The regulated part of the Fund is made up of Funeral Payments, Maternity Payments and Cold Weather Payments. The discretionary part of the Fund comprises Community Care Grants, Budgeting Loans and Crisis Loans. The qualifying conditions for the regulated SF are quite specific. Repayment of a loan from the discretionary part of the SF does not affect an application for a regulated payment. SF FPs are only recovered if there are sufficient funds in the deceased's estate. They are not recoverable from the person to whom they are awarded. Therefore, no FP claims were refused because the applicant was repaying a SF loan.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Income Support

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of lone parents in Scotland were living on income support each year since 1979.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is not available in the form requested. Such information as is available is in the table.

Scotland

Year	*Lone parents on benefit*	*All lone parents*	*Percentage %*
1979	34,000	—	—
1980	35,000	—	—
1981	40,000	93,000	43
1982	47,000	—	—
1983	53,000	—	—
1984	52,000	—	—

Year	Lone parents on benefit	All lone parents	Percentage %
1986	67,000	—	—
1987	76,000	—	—
1988	81,000	—	—
1989	88,000	—	—
1990	94,000	—	—
1991	102,000	132,000	77
1992	106,000	—	—
1993	106,000	—	—

Notes:
1. Sources: Supplementary Benefit Statistics Annual Enquiries 1979-1987; Income Support Statistics Annual Enquiries 1988-1992; Income Support Statistics Quarterly Enquiry, May 1993. Census 1981 and 1991, General Register Office for Scotland.
2. The answer has been rounded to the nearest thousand.
3. Supplementary benefit data is not available for 1985.
4. Information on the number of lone parents living in Scotland is only available for census years.
5. 1981 census figures include unmarried parents living with children.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many 16 and 17-year-olds in Scotland have been refused income support.

Mr. Burt: The information requested in respect of all claims from people aged 16 and 17 is not available. However, the success rate for those 16 and 17-year-olds who claimed under the severe hardship provision in Scotland was 82 per cent. in March 1994.

State Retirement Pensions

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list, for each of the member states of the European Union, the level of state retirement pensions at the most recent available dates in terms of *(a)* each country's currency, *(b)* ecus, *(c)* percentage of each country's average earnings and *(d)* in annual terms as a percentage of each country's gross domestic product per capita; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: Comparable figures on the level of state retirement pensions are not available in terms of national currency or ecus, or as a percentage of average earnings, for all European Union countries. This is because most have wholly earnings-related pension schemes, unlike the United Kingdom. In addition, information is not available on each member state's average level of earnings.

Information on pensions in the EU can be found in "MISSOC Social Protection", a copy of which is in the Library. In the United Kingdom information is published about levels of earnings from data collected in the New Earnings Survey; few countries have comparable surveys.

Information for *(d)* is not available in the form requested. The following Eurostat publications contain information on expenditure on the elderly in EU countries and copies are held in the Library:

Digest of Statistics on Social Protection in Europe, Volume 1: Old Age.

Social Protection Expenditure and Receipts 1980-1991.

Claimants

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much information is readily available to new claimants on what benefits they are entitled to and the processes involved; and what estimates are available as to how many people do not claim everything to which they are entitled.

Mr. Burt: This Department produces more than 130 leaflets, many in a number of languages, which provide information on the full range of social security benefits and details of how to claim. Leaflets are readily available at all Benefits Agency offices and post offices and are also supplied to many intermediary organisations such as the citizens advice bureaux. Information is also available in other formats such as Braille, audio cassette and video.

In addition, the Benefits Agency undertakes a wide range of initiatives to increase awareness of entitlement such as exhibitions, liaison with customers and their representatives and the operation of multilingual freelines.

The numbers taking up their entitlement are not uniform among benefits available. For most of the main contributory benefits such as widows' benefit, retirement pension, unemployment benefit and for child benefit, take-up is thought to be close to 100 per cent. The latest estimates for the take-up of income related benefits indicate that around £9 of every £10 of available benefit is claimed by more than four out of every five eligible to claim. These estimates are for 1991 and were published on 25 March 1994 in "Income Related Benefits—Estimates of Take-up in 1990 and 1991", a copy of which is in the Library.

Child Benefit

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many new claimants of child benefit there were in each quarter of 1993 and the first quarter of 1994; and which payment methods were taken up by such claimants.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the table:

Child Benefit

Period	Number of new claims	Method of payment: Automated credit transfer	Four-weekly order-book	Weekly order book
Quarter ending wc 30 March 1993	106,424	36,991	34,882	34,551
Quarter ending wc 30 June 1993	98,371	34,449	32,070	31,852
Quarter ending wc 28 September 1993	105,943	37,190	33,996	34,757
Quarter ending wc 30 December 1993	99,755	36,588	31,520	31,647
Quarter ending wc 29 March 1994	107,718	40,946	32,884	33,888

Overpayments

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the total losses recorded in the 1992-93 accounts of Government-administered social security

benefits and other payments in class XIV, vote 1, as a result of overpayments; and if he will publish a breakdown of overpayments for each category of benefit.

Mr. Scott: The table details the cash losses due to irrecoverable overpayments of pension benefits, war pensions, disability benefits, industrial injury benefits, income support and family benefits as recorded in the class XIV, vote 1, 1992-93 appropriation account.

Benefit	*Amount* £
Attendance allowance	896,498
Invalid care allowance	795,139
Mobility allowance	101,153
Disability living allowance	68,053
Industrial injury benefits	1,371
Severe disablement allowance	153
War pensions	239,019
Child benefit	2,791,928
Family credit	277,526
Income support	29,275,520
Total	34,446,360

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much of the Independent Living Fund (1993) annual budget was spent at the end of its first year; what plans he has in regard to the exclusion of people who are terminally ill from help from the fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I am informed by the director of the Independent Living Fund (1993) that the fund spent £841,858 in its first year of operation. The fund estimates that the full year costs of the case load taken on in its first year will be around £6·28 million in this financial year, assuming current trends.

People who are terminally ill are free to apply to the fund. The trustees consider all applications on their individual merits.

Invalidity Benefit

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many women aged 60 years or more have had the suspension of invalidity benefit lifted following Social Security Commissioner Skinner's decision in the case of Mrs. Rose Graham; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The latest available information relates to 31 August 1993, at which time the suspension of increases of benefit awarded as a result of the commissioner's decision had been lifted in 773 cases.

Source: 100 per cent. clerical count by Benefits Agency offices in Great Britain.

EDUCATION

Grant-maintained Schools (Advertising Campaign)

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will place in the Library a copy of his Department's response to the Advertising Standards Authority investigation into the recent grant-maintained school status advertising campaign.

Mr. Robin Squire: To make the Department's response public at this time could undermine the role of the ASA, which is investigating the complaints made under conditions of confidentiality. The outcome of the ASA's investigations will be published in the authority's monthly reports, copies of which are available free of charge from the ASA.

Discretionary Awards

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the annual expenditure in 1992-93 and 1993-94 on discretionary awards by each local authority at current prices and at 1983-84 prices.

Mr. Boswell: Returns made to the Department by local authorities about their expenditure on discretionary awards for the academic year 1992-93 will not be available for publication until later this summer. Data for 1993-94 have not yet been collected.

Home Repossessions

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many children changed schools last year as a result of home repossessions.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is not collected centrally.

Students (Maternity Leave)

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what provision is made for the support of students who have to break their studies for reasons of maternity.

Mr. Boswell: Where a student holds a mandatory award and is absent from his or her course, local education authorities have discretion to make payments up to the amount that would otherwise have been due under the Mandatory Awards Regulations. For students in receipt of discretionary awards, it is up to LEAs to decide whether to continue paying the award, in the light of their own policies.

Grant-maintained Schools

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to exempt any grant-maintained schools from the national curriculum.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has no plans to exempt any self-governing schools from the national curriculum, except in so far as he is considering a number of applications from state schools, including some self-governing schools, to teach an alternative to the present statutory programme for national curriculum technology.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Somalia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the incidence of cholera in Somalia; and what action is planned by Britain and the international community to counteract outbreaks.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: At 12 April, 7,477 cases, including 285 deaths, had been reported, mostly in the north-eastern, central and southern zones. Somali professionals, non-governmental organisations and United Nations agencies have established a cholera task force to co-ordinate the response to the recent outbreak. Britain has provided more than £297,000 since March in support of NGO cholera prevention and treatment work in Mogadishu, Kismayo, Afgoy and Hargeisa.

Sudan

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what were the terms of the draft humanitarian statement worked out under IGADD—the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development—auspices in Nairobi from 6 to 12 April for transporting relief supplies and humanitarian assistance in Sudan; and whether the terms of the statement were agreeable to the Government of Sudan and both SPLA factions.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No agreement on access was reached at the IGADD talks from 6 to 12 April. The terms of the draft under consideration at the talks were not made public.

Nigeria and Cameroon

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Governments of Nigeria and Cameroon about the future of United Kingdom aid to the Bakassi peninsula.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There are no United Kingdom aid projects in the Bakassi peninsula.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

European Convention on Human Rights

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the United Kingdom will ratify article 13 of the European convention on human rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom ratified the European convention on human rights, including article 13, on 8 March 1951.

Giant Tortoises, Galapagos Islands

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make immediate resources available to assist in the rescue of the giant tortoises currently threatened by fires on Isabela Island in the Galapagos Islands.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are most concerned about the fire on Isabela Island in the Galapagos archipelago and the threat that it poses to giant tortoises and other unique species of flora and fauna. We have donated $50,000 to the immediate relief effort being co-ordinated by the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs. Our ambassador is closely monitoring the situation and we have informed the Ecuadorean authorities that we are ready to consider any request to assist with the evacuation of the tortoises, if necessary.

Social Charter

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the workings of the Council of Europe social charter and its mechanism for enforcement; and what proposals the United Kingdom Government have to reform those mechanisms.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: At the start of 1991, the Council of Europe established a committee charged with making proposals on updating the European social charter and improving its operation. The United Kingdom has played a full and constructive part in the deliberations of that committee, which is due to complete its work at the end of this year.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many cases from the United Kingdom are currently being considered within the machinery of the Council of Europe social charter.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The governmental committee of the European social charter is currently considering the reports of both the committee of experts and the United Kingdom Government on 11 possible cases.

Azerbaijan

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the outcome of his investigations into the reports of the supply of arms and mercenaries from British sources in support of Azerbaijan in the conflict over Nagorno-Kharabakh; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin) on 13 April at column *206*. I have nothing further to add.

Land Mines

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent contact he has had with the German Government regarding their policy on the export of anti-personnel land mines.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has had no personal contact with the German Government on this matter. However, Foreign Office officials are in frequent contact with their counterparts in all European Union partner countries, and the subject was most recently discussed at a common foreign and security policy working group meeting on 7 April.

Nigeria and Cameroon

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking to safeguard the security of British nationals living on the Nigeria-Cameroon border.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Contact with British nationals in both Nigeria and Cameroon is maintained through the warden system. We are not aware of any concerns about their safety in the disputed border area.

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise with his French counterpart the question of trade with Cameroon.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There are no plans to do so.

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking to reduce armed conflict on the border between Cameroon and Nigeria.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have urged both sides to seek a peaceful, negotiated, mutually acceptable solution to the dispute, and have made available to both Governments historical documents relating to the area.

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications for Her Majesty's Government policy of the boundary dispute between the Governments of Nigeria and Cameroon.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It is a matter of great concern that there should be a dispute between two countries with which we maintain close relations. We have urged both sides to seek a peaceful solution.

HEALTH

Nurses

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the present level of nursing staff in the national health service with particular reference to the west midlands.

Mr. Sackville: Local managers have responsibility for staffing levels and determine, in consultation with professional service heads, the type and number of staff required to deliver nursing care to patients and clients. These arrangements apply throughout England.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has had from organisations or members of the public regarding the recruitment of nurses from the west midlands.

Mr. Sackville: During the last six months we have received four such representations from members of the public.

Radiotherapy Equipment

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to improve the quality of radiotherapy equipment.

Mr. Sackville: The performance of radiotherapy equipment should be defined, as part of the specification, when the equipment is purchased from the manufacturers. It is the user's responsibility to ensure that performance is maintained to meet current treatment requirements.

All medical devices should be purchased from manufacturers who manufacture to a recognised quality assurance system. Such QA systems include those which comply with BS 5750, ISO 9000, BS EN 29000. The Department's medical devices directorate operates a manufacturers registration scheme to register manufacturers whose QA systems have been audited by MDD.

The Department recommends that all medical devices are managed according to the principles of the document Health Equipment Information 98 "Management of medical equipment and devices", November 1990. This gives advice on, selection, acceptance testing, training, servicing and replacement, amongst other things. Copies will be placed in the Library.

From 1 January 1995, the medical devices directive takes effect for new medical devices placed on the market. All medical devices covered by the directive will need to carry a CE mark to denote compliance with the essential requirements as defined in the directive by 1997.

Alcohol

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what levels of alcohol intake have been recommended as a maximum by her Department; what recent research her Department has commissioned as to healthy levels of alcohol intake; and what plans she has to issue revised guidelines.

Mr. Bowis: The Government do not recommend maximum levels of alcohol intake. Our advice to people who wish to drink alcohol is that drinking less than 21 units per week by men or 14 units per week by women is unlikely to damage health. Drinkers are also advised that consuming more than 50 units of alcohol a week for men or 35 for women is definitely dangerous to health. The Department have not commissioned any recent research into healthy levels of alcohol intake, but the results of research nationally and internationally are monitored by our medical and scientific staff. We have no plans at present to change our advice to drinkers. In the light of recent research findings, however, the Government have decided to consider whether the sensible drinking message needs any modification or qualification. Details of action proposed will be announced shortly.

Programme Expenditure

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish an updated table of hospital and community health service programme expenditure by age group on the lines of that for 1986-87 supplied to the Social Services Select Committee in 1988 and printed as House of Commons Paper No. 548 of Session 1987-88 but using the reported changes of 1989-90 in cash terms and cash adjusted for NHS pay and prices for each year since 1989-90.

Dr. Mawhinney: House of Commons Paper No. 548 of Session 1987-88 did not include a table giving hospital and community health service programme expenditure by age group.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what pension entitlements and other benefits, including subsistence and travelling allowances, are paid to non-executive directors of national health service trusts; and when these will be revised.

Dr. Mawhinney: Non-executive directors of national health service trusts receive annual remuneration of £5,000. In addition, they receive subsistence and travelling expenses at the rates set out in appendix 4 of "Financial

Matters", May 1993, copies of which are available in the Library. These rates are under review. Non-executive directors are not entitled to receive any additional benefits.

Health Authorities

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what salaries, remuneration, pensions entitlement and other benefits, including subsistence and travelling allowances, are payable to *(a)* non-executive members and *(b)* chairs of district and regional health authorities; and when these will be revised.

Dr. Mawhinney: The annual rate of remuneration payable to non-executive members of regional and district health authorities and family health services authorities is £5,000. The remuneration of the chairmen of regional and district health authorities and family health services authorities is calculated in accordance with the table:

RHA, DHA, FHSA and trust chairmen: Remuneration rates per year

	£
RHA chairmen	20,925
DHA chairmen	
Band 1	19,285
Band 2	17,145
Band 3	15,125
FHSA chairmen	
Band 1	12,605
Band 2	11,720
Band 3	10,845

Banding Criteria:

		Band
DHA Chairmen	*DHA Revenue budget 1985-86*	
Teaching	£45 million or more	1
Non-teaching	£60 million or more	1
Teaching	Under £45 million	2
Non-teaching	£30 million to £60 million	2
Non-teaching	Under £30 million	3
FHSA Chairmen	*FHSA population Mid-1985*	
	Over 750,000	1
	250,000—750,000	2
	Under 250,000	3

The current rates of payment of subsistence and travelling allowances are set out in appendix 4 of "Financial Matters", January 1993, a copy of which is held in the library. The rates are currently under review. Chairmen and non-executive members are not entitled to receive any additional benefits.

Medical Treatment (Definition)

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the definition of medical treatment used for the purpose of deciding whether a patient should have a bed paid for fully by the NHS in a private nursing home.

Mr. Bowis: It is the responsibility of the national health service to provide long-term care for those who require it for reasons of ill health. It is for local health care purchasers to determine the level and type of services provided, including full-time care funded by the NHS in hospital or in an appropriate facility in the independent sector. In doing so, they will need to take account of the range of local circumstances, needs, resources and clinical practice.

Doncaster Royal Infirmary and Montagu NHS Trust

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will publish the audit report for 1992-93 in respect of the Doncaster royal infirmary and Montagu NHS trust;

(2) if she will publish the 1992-93 audit report in respect of the Doncaster health care trust.

Mr. Sackville: We have received no statutory audit reports on Doncaster healthcare national health service trust or on Doncaster Royal Infirmary and Montagu Hospital NHS trust for 1992-93. However, auditors produce an annual management letter for each audit client which is not published. It is for the auditor to decide whether any matter requires a public report.

Community Pharmacists

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much is paid to a community pharmacist for each NHS prescription dispensed.

Dr. Mawhinney: Community pharmacists are paid a professional fee of £1·35 per prescription for the first 1,700 prescriptions they dispense each month and a fee of 94·5p per prescription for the remainder. They can also receive additional fees, for example if an item is dispensed urgently or extemporaneously.

HIV Screening

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she or her Ministers have had with the Department of Employment regarding the circumstances in which an employer may seek to have employees screened for HIV and the need to ensure informed consent and counselling for any such test.

Mr. Sackville: The Department of Employment has set out its policy regarding screening employees for HIV infection in its booklet "AIDS and the Workplace—A Guide for Employers", copies of which are available in the Library. The policy is a long-standing one which reflects interdepartmental discussion.

Medical Audits

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what medical audits have been carried out of the quality of treatment being received by *(a)* patients of fund holding general practitioners practices and *(b)* patients of non-fundholding general practitioner practices; and what plans she has to commission further such studies.

Dr. Mawhinney: Our view is that audit priorities are best determined locally by individual general practitioner practices, in the light of local requirements. To assist this, we have made funds available through family health services authorities to enable all practices—including fundholding practices—to participate in medical audit.

Amyl Nitrate

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations she has received regarding amyl nitrate; and if she will now invite the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs to initiate research on the effects of amyl nitrate on children and young people.

Mr. Bowis: The Department has received a number of representations regarding amyl nitrate since the beginning of this year.

We are aware of concerns about its use among children and young people and we are keeping the matter under review, including the need for any research.

Medicines Policy

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her policy in respect of printing the retail price recommended by the manufacturer on all packs of prescription and over-the-counter medicines.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have no plans to show the price of national health service prescription medicines on the label. The sale of over the counter medicines is governed by retail price maintenance and is a matter for the suppliers.

Nurse Practitioner Training

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what resources have been devoted to the training of nurse practitioners in each of the last five years;

(2) what was the number of nurse practitioners practising in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: Health authorities commission education and training to meet demand forecasts for qualified nursing staff. Information on the resources devoted to the training of nurse practitioners and the number in post is not available centrally.

Temazepam

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will indicate the level of intravenous abuse of Temazepam capsules.

Mr. Bowis: The information available is contained in the drug misuse statistics for the six months to March 1993 published by the Department last month. This includes some information on drug misusers reporting benzodiazepine misuse, including injecting misuse, of which temazepam is one such drug. Copies of the drug misuse statistics are available in the Library.

Pharmacists

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of state for Health (1) how much is paid by patients to the community pharmacist over and above the cost of the prescribed medicine for a private, non-NHS, prescription;

(2) if her Department will consider laying down firm fees which pharmacists can charge for dispensing private prescriptions.

Dr. Mawhinney: Guidance on the dispensing of private prescriptions is a matter for the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain. Information on charges levied by community pharmacists for dispensing private prescriptions is not collected by the Department.

Junior Doctors

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many junior doctors are employed in each of London's regional health authorities; and how many were employed in each year since 1990-91.

Dr. Mawhinney: The available information is shown in the table.

Junior doctors in the London regional health authorities: 30 September 1990, 1991 and 1992

	1990	1991	1992
Total	7,240	7,290	7,270
North West Thames	2,030	2,070	1,840
North East Thames	2,170	2,170	2,270
South East Thames	1,800	1,770	1,840
South West Thames	1,240	1,280	1,320

Source: Medical and Dental Manpower Census September 1992.

Age Discrimination

Mr. Davidson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what current NHS rules and practice enable the age of a patient to be taken into account by a general practitioner or a general practitioner practice when determining whether to accept a new patient on to their lists; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has had from the Pensioners Liaison Forum North-west, in regard to equal access to health care for elderly people; what reply she is sending; what action she is taking; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received a letter from the Pensioners Liaison Forum North-west on this subject. Our reply will reaffirm that it is the duty of the national health service to provide health services for all, regardless of age, on the basis of clinical need.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to publish guidelines for general practitioner fundholders in relation to taking patients off their lists; and what plans she has to investigate any fundholding GP practices which remove patients from their list on the basis of the patients' age.

Dr. Mawhinney: None. The requirements for general practitioner fundholders are exactly the same as for other GPs in this respect.

Paracetamol-Methionin Product

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to make a paracetamol-methionin product available on NHS prescription.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Luton and Dunstable Trust Hospital

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 22 March, *Official Report*, column *163*, whether her Department is conducting an inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the resignation of Mrs. Avril Dongworth, chief executive at Luton and Dunstable trust hospital.

Dr. Mawhinney: No.

Patients Charter

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to add to the patients charter rights for children damaged by vaccines.

Mr. Sackville: None.

The Vaccine Damage Payment Act 1979 provides a scheme of one off, lump sum payments where it can be shown on the balance of probability that damage has resulted from vaccination. Receipt of a payment does not prejudice the individual's right to pursue a private claim for damages through the courts.

Sleeping Drugs

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what restrictions are in place on advertising drugs available without prescription which are designed to aid sleep; what checks are carried out to ensure that addictive or potentially harmful drugs are not advertised for mass consumption; what health warnings should be given in such advertisements; in what ways regulations or guidelines on the advertisement of such drugs have been amended or relaxed within the past five years; what plans she has to introduce new legislation, statutory orders or guidelines to regulate the promotion of aids to sleep which are available without prescription; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Licensed medicines may be advertised only under the stringent controls of the Medicines Act 1968 and supporting regulations. These ensure that the advertising is in accordance with the product licence and is not misleading. Products which are available without prescription may be advertised to the public, in compliance with the Medicines (Labelling and Advertising to the Public) Regulations 1978. These regulations prohibit the advertising of a treatment for sleeplessness or insomnia, advertising for the relief of temporary sleeplessness is not prohibited.

Medicines which we consider to be addictive or potentially harmful when used without medical supervision are only available on prescription and may not be advertised to the public. Proposed legislation to amend the 1978 regulations in order to implement Council directive 92/28/EEC is currently under consideration.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if any new local authority established, following the review of local government, will be required by statute to establish a social services committee and to appoint a director of social services adequately qualified to perform the responsibilities of that position.

Mr. Bowis: The Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 requires all social services authorities to establish social services committees and appoint directors of social services. It also allows for these to be joint appointments or arrangements.

The Act does not make any provision as regards the qualifications of directors of social services. That is a matter for individual authorities.

Unregistered Residential Homes

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the fees of residents in unregistered residential homes may be met from public funds.

Mr. Bowis: Local authorities may purchase services from homes which are not required to register under the Registered Care Homes Act 1984, where that would be appropriate for the individual user concerned.

Health Services, Leeds

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many GP practices participated in the fundholding initiative in the area covered by the Leeds family health services authority in 1993-94; and how many it is estimated will participate in 1994-95.

Dr. Mawhinney: Regional health authorities manage the general practitioner fundholding scheme in their areas. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of Northern and Yorkshire regional health authority for local details.

Exercise Diver Mist

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many personnel from her Department were involved in Exercise Diver Mist; in what capacities they serve; and what was the cost to her Department of this involvement.

Mr. Sackville: None.

District Ethical Committees

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what responsibility there is for general practitioners to seek permission from district ethical committees prior to embarking on research in primary care; and what is the composition of these committees.

Dr. Mawhinney: Local research ethics committees should be consulted about any research proposal involving national health service patients or their records. This applies to proposals from general practitioners in the same way as it does to all others. Departmental guidance states that the committees should have eight to 12 members, including hospital medical staff, nurses, general practitioners, and two or more lay people. Copies of the guidance, "Local Research Ethics Committees", are available in the Library.

ENVIRONMENT

Benzene

Sir Malcolm Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the findings of his Department's expert panel on air quality standards on the proportion of benzene in the air that is emitted from petrol engine exhausts; what action he will take to reduce this source of pollution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: In the first report of my Department's expert panel on air quality standards, a copy of which is in the Library, it was estimated that petrol engine exhausts contributed about 78 per cent. of the total 1991 national

emissions of benzene, the bulk of which were derived from non-catalyst equipped vehicles. Since December 1992, regulations have been in place which effectively require all new petrol-engined passenger cars to be fitted with catalytic convertors which reduce emissions of benzene by around 80 per cent.

Further regulations are already in place which will also extend the catalyst requirement to new petrol-driven car-derived vans from 1 October 1994. A new European Parliament and Council Directive, 94/12/EC, OJ L100/42 of 19 April 1994 has been adopted which will require further reduction in emissions from new cars from 1 January 1997, necessitating additional improvements in catalyst efficiency which will also further reduce benzene emissions. An estimated 2·5 million cars are already fitted with these devices and, as the decade advances, there will be a natural progression towards an almost total catalyst equipped fleet by the year 2003.

Vacant Housing

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of local authority housing is left vacant; and what proportion of this is marked either in need of renovation, repairs or unfit, or for rehousing for clearance purposes for each local authority in England; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I have today placed in the Library a table giving the available information reported on the 1993 housing investment programme—HIP1—returns by local authorities about their own dwellings which were vacant at 1 April 1993.

Renovation Grants

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how widely distributed is information given to promote the availability and procedures for obtaining mandatory renovation grants; and what estimate he has of the number of home owners or private landlords who are not aware of such availability or the procedures involved.

Sir George Young: Copies of a joint Department of the Environment and Welsh Office booklet, "House Renovation Grants", are freely available on application to the Department. Local authorities, home improvement agencies, citizens advice bureaux and similar bodies have the function of informing potential applicants about these grants.

Home Improvement Grants

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he expects to announce his decisions arising from the consultation on renovation grants; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans there are for the future development of mandatory home improvement grants;

(3) what plans he has to move to the prioritisation of mandatory home improvement grants on to unfit privately rented properties; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: We will announce our conclusions on the future of private sector renewal programmes, following last year's consultation exercise, in due course.

Local Government

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to ensure that any new local authorities established as a result of the current review of local government have a population of at least 200,000; and what estimate he has made as to the population base that will normally be required for the effective delivery of social services in more rural areas.

Mr. Curry: Our policy guidance to the Local Government Commission makes it clear that there need be no maximum or minimum size for the area or population covered by a unitary authority. As to the delivery of social services, population size does not determine effectiveness; we will look at each set of final recommendations by the commission on its merits. There are various ways in which local authorities can work together, if necessary, to provide specialist services.

Housing Associations

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the Government's proposals following their access to local authority housing association tenancies consultation.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Lady to the answers I gave on 12 and 21 April respectively to the hon. Members for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) and for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), *Official Report*, columns *132* and *587*.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the expected staff and administration costs and gross expenditure of the Leeds UDC and the Central Manchester UDC.

Mr. Baldry: The staff and administration costs and gross expenditure of these UDCs are contained in the Supply Estimates, 1994-95, class VII—Environment.

Record Offices

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list *(a)* the record offices in England, *(b)* the number of people they employ, both paid and voluntary and *(c)* the number of people that use the service annually and the amount of revenue they receive.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 26 April 1994]:* Records of central Government are the responsibility of the Public Record Office, for which my right hon. Friend the Lord Chancellor is responsible. Local authority record offices are listed in the table. Their staffing and operation are the responsibility of the individual local authorities, and information on employees and users is not held centrally. In their 1992-93 expenditure returns local authorities recorded income from achive services totalling around £3·5 million.

Local Authority Record Offices in England

County councils	Cornwall
Bedfordshire	Cumbria
Berkshire	Derbyshire
Buckinghamshire	Durham
Cambridgeshire	Essex
Cheshire	Gloucestershire
Cleveland	Hampshire

Hereford and Worcester
Hertfordshire
Humberside
Isle of Wight
Kent
Lancashire
Leicestershire
Lincolnshire
Norfolk
Northamptonshire
Northumberland
North Yorkshire
Oxfordshire
Shropshire
Somerset
Staffordshire
Suffolk
Surrey
Warwickshire
West Sussex
Wiltshire

London boroughs
Barking and Dagenham
Barnet
Bexley
Brent
Bromley
Corporation of London
Enfield
Greenwich
Hackney
Haringey
Hounslow
Kensington and Chelsea
Kingston upon Thames
Southwark
Tower Hamlets
Waltham Forest
Westminster

Metropolitan district councils
Bolton
Bury
Calderdale
Coventry
Doncaster
Dudley
Kirklees
Liverpool
Manchester
Rotherham
St. Helens
Salford
Sheffield
Stockport
Tyne and Wear
Wakefield
West Yorkshire archive service (comprises Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield)
Walsall
Wigan
Wirral
Wolverhampton

District councils
Bath
Bristol
Canterbury
Chester
Epsom and Ewell
Glanford
Hull
North Wiltshire
Peterborough
Poole
Portsmouth
Ribble Valley
Rochester upon Medway
Southampton
Thurrock
York

Lead Water Pipes

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make grants available for replacement of lead water pipes to council house tenants.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 26 April 1994]:* Local housing authorities are issued with housing investment programme allocations, reflecting the relative need for housing capital expenditure in their areas. It is for each authority to decide how to use its housing capital resources.

Wetlands

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those wetland areas that would be affected by a national management plan for the habitats of redshank and dunlin requested by the European Environment Commissioner.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 28 April 1994]:* The great majority of inter-tidal mud flats in United Kingdom estuaries provide over-wintering habitat for redshank and dunlin and, as such, would be taken into account in measures to maintain a favourable conservation status for these species.

Single Regeneration Budget

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the planned spending on *(a)* inner city task forces, *(b)* regional enterprise grants, *(c)* safer cities, *(d)* section II grants, *(e)* ethnic minority grants, *(f)* ethnic minority business initiative, *(g)* grants for education support and training, *(h)* the programme development fund, *(i)* education business partnerships, *(j)* teacher placement schemes, *(k)* compacts, *(l)* the business start-up scheme, *(m)* local initiative fund schemes under the single regeneration budget for 1994-95, 1995-96 and 1996-97.

Mr. Baldry: Planned spending by my Department on each of these component items within the single regeneration budget in 1994-95 is as follows:

	£ million
Inner city task forces	16
Regional enterprise grants	9
Safer cities	4
Section 11—urban	60
Ethnic minority grants	6
Ethnic minority business initiative	1
Grants for education support and training—GEST19	5
Programme development fund	3
Education business partnerships	2
Teacher placement service	3
Compacts	6
Business start-up scheme	70
Local initiative fund	29

For 1995-96 and beyond, English partnerships, housing action trusts and urban development corporations will, as now, receive specific allocations; and the rest of the Budget, including items *(a)* to *(m)*, will be combined.

On current plans, expenditure under the single regeneration budget will be worth some £1·3 billion in each of 1995-96 and 1996-97. The Department of the Environment's 1994 annual report provides more detailed information.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what changes he is proposing in relation to the urban priority areas; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what he projects the financial implications will be for the urban priority areas, arising from the single regeneration budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Regeneration programmes that have previously been targeted on the existing list of 57 urban priority areas now form part of the single regeneration budget. Since the budget is available throughout England, and proposals for funding will be locally driven, the existing list will not be used to direct budget resources and is being discontinued after 1994-95.

In assessing proposals for funding from the budget which aim mainly at relieving deprivation, the Government offices for the regions will take account of detailed information about local conditions based on the 1991 index of local conditions and other data, including Employment Service information on labour market needs and gaps. The index will be published shortly.

Existing commitments under the programmes which have been combined to form the budget will be honoured.

Repossessions

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many properties purchased under the right-to-buy initiative have been repossessed; and what percentage of this figure comprises households who were unable to meet the service charges levied by their local authority.

Sir George Young: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) of 29 March, *Official Report*, column *663*, if he will list the local authorities involved in the 122 cases referred to; and if he will list the authorities in respect of which statutory follow up action was taken in relation to compulsory competitive tendering.

Mr. Baldry: The Secretary of State took statutory action in a total of 122 cases during 1993, serving 99 notices and giving 23 follow-up directions. The authorities to which the statutory action related, and the services concerned, are as follows:

Statutory notices and directions relating to anti-competitive behaviour

Authority and date	*Service concerned*
NOTICES IN RELATION TO ALLEGED ANTI-COMPETITIVE BEHAVIOUR (LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)	
Adur DC	
1 September 1993	Other cleaning
Arun DC	
7 May 1993	Sport and leisure management
Birmingham City Council	
22 April 1993	Building maintenance
Bradford MDC	
13 May 1993	Building maintenance
10 September 1993	Highways and sewers
Calderdale MBC	
23 December 1993	Ground maintenance
Chester City Council	
1 April 1993	Ground maintenance
Dudley MBC	
22 April 1993	Ground maintenance
Harrow LB	
20 October 1993	Other catering
Langbaurgh on Tees BC	
10 September 1993	Street lighting
21 December 1993	Ground maintenance
Leeds City Council	
10 September 1993	Refuse collection
Oldham MBC	
6 April 1993	Ground maintenance
Oswestry BC	
10 September 1993	Sport and leisure management
Portsmouth City Council	
30 June 1993	Building maintenance
South Somerset DC	
30 March 1993	Sport and leisure management
South Tyneside MDC	
1 February 1993	Ground maintenance
Staffordshire Moorlands DC	
11 January 1993	Sport and leisure management
Stockton-on-Tees BC	
8 March 1993	Other cleaning
Warrington BC	
10 June 1993	Ground maintenance
DIRECTIONS RELATING TO ANTI-COMPETITIVE BEHAVIOUR (LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)	
Birmingham City Council	
13 July 1993	Building maintenance
8 October 1993[1]	Building maintenance
Bolton MBC	
1 April 1993	Building maintenance
Bradford MDC	
14 December 1993	Highways and sewers
Chester City Council	
24 June 1993	Ground maintenance
Mole Valley DC	
24 March 1993[2]	Sport and leisure management
Portsmouth City Council	
10 September 1993	Building maintenance
Sefton MBC	
23 April 1993[3]	Highways and sewers
South Tyneside BC	
27 July 1993[4]	Ground maintenance
Stockton-on-Tees BC	
19 February 1993[5]	Refuse collection
27 July 1993	Other cleaning
Warrington BC	
14 December 1993	Ground maintenance

[1] Variation to direction given on 13 July 1993.
[2] Variation to direction given on 15 July 1992.
[3] Variation to direction given on 2 December 1992.
[4] Variation to direction given on 23 December 1993.
[5] Replacement for direction given on 12 November 1992.

Statutory notices and directions relating to financial failure

Authority and date	*Service concerned*
NOTICES RELATING TO FINANCIAL FAILURE (LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)	
Ashford BC	
1 September 1993	Ground maintenance
1 September 1993	Refuse collection
Barking and Dagenham LB	
1 September 1993	Refuse collection
Bedfordshire CC	
29 September 1993	Ground maintenance
Blackburn BC	
11 May 1993	Building maintenance
11 May 1993	Construction <£50,000
11 May 1993	Construction >£50,000
Bournemouth BC	
15 June 1993	Highways and sewers

Authority and date	Service concerned
Brent LB	
11 May 1993	Building maintenance
11 May 1993	Vehicle maintenance
11 May 1993	Ground maintenance
11 May 1993	Building cleaning
11 May 1993	Other catering
Brighton BC	
1 September 1993	Other catering
Cambridgeshire CC	
15 June 1993	Highways and sewers
Camden LB	
25 March 1993	Building maintenance
11 May 1993	Highways and sewers
11 May 1993	Construction >£50,000
11 May 1993	Construction <£50,000
11 May 1993	Vehicle maintenance
Canterbury City Council	
7 April 1993	Building maintenance
7 April 1993	Highways and sewers
7 April 1993	Other catering
7 April 1993	Sport and leisure management
7 April 1993	School and welfare catering
Castle Point DC	
1 September 1993	Ground maintenance
1 September 1993[1]	Other cleaning
Colchester BC	
1 September 1993	Building maintenance
Corby DC	
1 September 1993	Vehicle maintenance
Crewe and Nantwich BC	
15 June 1993	Highways and sewers
Daventry DC	
7 April 1993	Highways and sewers
Devon CC	
11 May 1993	Construction >£50,000
11 May 1993	Other cleaning
Epsom and Ewell BC	
15 June 1993	Highways and sewers
Exeter City Council	
15 June 1993	Building maintenance
Hammersmith and Fulham LB	
7 April 1993	Building maintenance
7 April 1993	Highways and sewers
Hampshire CC	
7 April 1993	Highways and sewers
Harborough DC	
15 June 1993	Refuse collection
Harrow LB	
1 September 1993	Ground maintenance
Hereford and Worcester CC	
7 April 1993	Building maintenance
Hillingdon LB	
1 September 1993	Building cleaning
1 September 1993	School and welfare catering
1 September 1993	Other catering
Kennet DC	
15 June 1993	Building maintenance
Kerrier DC	
11 May 1993	Ground maintenance
Kingston upon Hull City Council	
1 September 1993	Other catering
Kingston upon Thames LB	
1 September 1993[1]	Other cleaning
Leicestershire CC	
1 September 1993	Ground maintenance
Liverpool City Council	
7 April 1993	Highways and sewers
Luton BC	
11 May 1993	Highways and sewers
Manchester City Council	
15 June 1993	Construction >£50,000
Mansfield DC	
15 June 1993	Construction >£50,000
Northavon DC	
1 September 1993	Vehicle maintenance
Peterborough City Council	
15 June 1993	Highways and sewers
Plymouth City Council	
11 May 1993	Highways and sewers
11 May 1993	Ground maintenance
Reading BC	
15 June 1993	Sport and leisure management
Redditch BC	
15 June 1993	Highways and sewers
Richmond upon Thames LB	
1 September 1993	Ground maintenance
Rother DC	
11 May 1993	Ground maintenance
Sandwell DC	
7 April 1993	Building maintenance
Sheffield City Council	
11 May 1993	Ground maintenance
South Bedfordshire DC	
29 September 1993	Refuse collection
Southwark LB	
7 April 1993	Highways and sewers
7 April 1993	Ground maintenance
7 April 1993	Refuse collection
7 April 1993	Vehicle maintenance
St. Albans City Council	
15 June 1993	Building maintenance
Stevenage BC	
11 May 1993	Highways and sewers
Stoke on Trent DC	
25 January 1993	Building maintenance
7 April 1993	Construction >£50,000
7 April 1993	Highways and sewers
7 April 1993	Other cleaning
7 April 1993	Refuse collection
Tameside MBC	
15 June 1993	Building maintenance

Authority and date	Service concerned
Tamworth BC	
15 June 1993	Building maintenance
Waltham Forest LB	
7 April 1993	Ground maintenance
Warwick DC	
15 June 1993	Building maintenance
DIRECTIONS RELATING TO FINANCIAL FAILURE (LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)	
Bedfordshire CC	
9 December 1993	Ground maintenance
Camden LB	
3 August 1993	Vehicle maintenance
3 August 1993	Building maintenance
3 August 1993	Single direction covering the following activities: Highways and sewers; Construction <£50,000; Construction >£50,000
Castle Point BC	
9 December 1993	Ground maintenance
Hammersmith and Fulham LB	
23 July 1993	Highways and sewers
23 July 1993	Building maintenance
Hillingdon LB	
9 December 1993	Other catering
Manchester City Council	
9 December 1993	Construction >£50,000
South Bedfordshire DC	
9 December 1993	Refuse collection
Waltham Forest LB	
23 July 1993	Ground maintenance

[1] Revised 2 September.

EC Waste Shipments Regulation

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will lay before Parliament regulations to supplement the provisions of the EC Waste Shipments Regulation which applies from 6 May.

Mr. Atkins: The Transfrontier Shipment of Waste Regulations 1994, laid before Parliament on Monday 25 April, will come into force on 6 May when Council Regulation EEC No. 259/93 on the supervision and control of shipments of waste within, into and out of the European Community—the "Waste Shipments Regulation"—applies. The Waste Shipments Regulation implements the obligations of the Basel convention which, together with the EC, the United Kingdom ratified on 7 February and to which it will become a party on 8 May. The EC regulation is directly applicable, but additional domestic legislation is required to give full effect to some of its provisions. For the United Kingdom, this additional legislation is contained in the Transfrontier Shipment of Waste Regulations 1994.

The regulations designate waste regulations authorities in Great Britain and district councils in Northern Ireland as the competent authorities of dispatch and destination, for imports and exports to and from the United Kingdom, and designate the Secretary of State as competent authority for transit shipments, and as "correspondent" for the purposes of the EC regulation. Other provisions include conferring powers on customs officers to assist competent authorities in carrying out their functions by detaining shipments where appropriate; and specifying offences and penalties relating to compliance with the regulation. The regulations also provide for the preparation of a waste management plan, in accordance with the waste framework directive.

Public consultations were carried out in March on a draft of the regulations and of the accompanying guidance. The regulations have been modified to reflect the concerns and interests of industry, local authorities and the public in response to those consultations. The Government are satisfied that these regulations will enable the United Kingdom to fulfil its obligations under the Basel convention, and contribute significantly towards securing the environmentally sound management of waste movements to and from the United Kingdom.

Public Housing

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new houses have been built to replace houses with defective concrete in *(a)* Cornwall, *(b)* Devon, *(c)* Somerset and *(d)* Dorset; and how much public money has been made available by the Government for repairs and maintenance of public housing in these four counties since 1979.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 12 April 1994]:* The Department collects information about total housebuilding by local authorities, but not about the reasons for it.

Figures for housing revenue account subsidy for repair and maintenance by local authorities on their own dwelling stock are only available since 1990-91. The following levels of subsidy were given to authorities in the four counties:

HRA subsidy paid for repairs and maintenance by local authorities:

	1990-91 to 1993-94: £ million
Cornwall	[1]41·9
Devon	102·0
Dorset	47·7
Somerset	58·3

[1] Excluding subsidy paid to Carrick BC in 1990-91.

The actual expenditure by local authorities on repair and maintenance will differ from the subsidy paid by the Government.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Aquarium, London

Mr. Dickens: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what the Government's policy is towards the building of a major new aquarium in London.

Mr. Sproat: I would greatly welcome the establishment of a major new aquarium in London. This would be a valuable new educational and tourist attraction. While the responsibility, including the financing, for taking such a project forward would rest wholly with its promoter, I would be interested to hear from any group or individual who can help to establish such an aquarium. Any promoter may wish to consider an association with the natural history museum.

English Heritage (North Yorkshire)

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how much was spent by English Heritage on properties and activities in North Yorkshire in 1993-94; and how much is budgeted for such activities in 1994-95.

Mr. Brooke: In 1993-94, English Heritage spent £4·3 million on its historic properties and other activities in North Yorkshire. The other activities relate to conservation grants, marketing, and research and professional services. Assuming a similar level of expenditure on grants, which are dependent on demand, a further £4·3 million is expected to be spent in 1994-95.

SCOTLAND

Local Government Reform

16. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received on the reform of local government in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend continues to receive a range of representations about the Government's proposals for local government reform in Scotland. Since January I have met 24 hon. Members who accompanied delegations.

19. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the provisions of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill allowing Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee to become single-tier authorities again.

Mr. Lang: I have received a number of representations supporting the proposal to establish Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee as single-tier authorities. The proposal has been widely welcomed.

Rural Community Hospitals

18. **Mr. Kynoch:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what priority he attaches to rural community hospitals in Scotland as part of the care in the community initiative and the NHS reforms.

Mr. Stewart: Our main priority is to provide high quality health care which is easily accessible to local communities. We will continue to examine the role which rural community hospitals have to play in achieving this.

Trunk Roads

20. **Mr. Raymond S. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much was spent in each of the past three years on upgrading trunk roads in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The figures for new construction and improvement of motorways and trunk roads in Scotland for 1991-92 was £175 million, for 1992-93 was £198 million and for 1993-94 was £196 million.

"Setting Forth"

21. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to announce the result of his consultation on the document, "Setting Forth"; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We issued our response to the consultation on "Setting Forth" on 1 February 1993, following which a range of feasibility studies on aspects of the proposed road bridge across the Forth and associated road and rail links were put in hand. These studies are nearing completion and the results will be published as soon as possible.

Forestry Policy

22. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to announce a decision on his future forestry policy.

Sir Hector Monro: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that my right hon. Friend gave to the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) and my hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewksbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) earlier this afternoon.

Water Services

23. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he has given to the membership of the water authorities.

Sir Hector Monro: Membership of the new water authorities will include persons knowledgeable about the industry, and persons with proven business skills. We will also expect to see a significant number of local councillors taking up appointments. No individual members have yet been considered.

27. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many water authorities he has visited in Scotland this year to discuss with them his proposals for removing water and sewerage services from local authority control.

Sir Hector Monro: My right hon. Friend has made no such visits. Discussion with local authorities has been prevented by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities campaign of non-co-operation.

33. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss the future of water services in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: My right hon. Friend last discussed water and sewerage with COSLA on 9 July 1993. Subsequent discussion has been prevented by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities boycott.

37. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the new water board to be set up in Scotland has autonomy to sell off land and property without consultation.

Sir Hector Monro: The Local Government Etc. (Scotland) Bill provides for new water authorities to dispose of land and property as they see fit. They may not, however, dispose of land for a consideration less than the best expected value on the open market without the consent of the Secretary of State.

39. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last visited a local authority-run water treatment works.

Sir Hector Monro: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has not made an official visit to a water treatment works.

Concessionary Travel

24. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures he intends to take to safeguard concessionary travel for pensioners following local government reorganisation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: After local government reform, the new councils will retain the discretionary powers currently available to regional and islands councils under section 93 of the Transport Act 1985 which allows local authorities to establish a concessionary travel scheme for eligible categories of person. The Strathclyde passenger transport authority will also have the power to establish a scheme for its area.

Acute Beds

25. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairs of the health boards to discuss acute beds in hospitals.

Mr. Stewart: My noble and learned Friend the Minister of State met health board chairmen on 25 February 1994.

Health Provision, Glasgow

26. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will next meet the chairman of the Greater Glasgow health board to discuss health provision in the Glasgow area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: My noble and learned Friend the Minister of State regularly meets representatives from all health boards to discuss health provision issues. There are no immediate plans for a further meeting at present.

Businesses Support

28. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to support businesses.

Mr. Stewart: A wide range of measures are in place, and continue to be evolved, to support businesses in Scotland. These include support through central Government, local authorities, the Scottish enterprise bodies and others. Examples of recent initiatives include the Clydebank business creation centre, which I opened formally on 15 April, and the Scottish business shop network launched by my right hon. Friend on 18 April and involving a partnership between Scottish Enterprise and its local enterprise companies, local authorities, enterprise agencies and chambers of commerce.

NHS Doctors

29. **Mr. Gallie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many doctors were employed in the NHS in Scotland in 1979; and how many currently.

Mr. Stewart: The number of doctors employed in the NHS hospital and community health services in Scotland, whole-time equivalent, was 5,613·3 in 1979 and 6,405·6 in 1993. In addition, the number of general medical practitioners, as a head count, was 3,190 in 1979 and 3,824 in 1993. The figures for 1993 are provisional.

Heavy Goods Vehicle Licences

30. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the Department of Transport to discuss the proposed increase in charges for heavy goods vehicle licences and their extension to Scottish islands.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has had no meetings with the Department of Transport to discuss changes to the heavy goods vehicle licensing regime.

Local Enterprise Companies

31. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to redraw the boundaries of local enterprise companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to redraw the boundaries of local enterprise companies. Should he receive representations in favour of any adjustments once the Local Government Etc. (Scotland) Bill, which alters local authority boundaries, has received Royal Assent, he would of course consider these.

Tourism

32. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman of the Scottish tourist board to discuss tourism in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend regularly discusses tourism matters with the chairman of the Scottish tourist board.

Cottage Hospitals

34. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to meet the chairmen of the three Tayside health hospital trusts to discuss the future of cottage hospitals.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend has no immediate plans to meet the chairmen to discuss the future of cottage hospitals.

Mountain Climbers

35. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice the Scottish tourist board gives to mountain climbers about safety.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish tourist board's "Walk Scotland" brochure provides general advice on safety and is available on request to anyone wishing information on Scotland's hills and mountains. This advice complements that which is issued by the Scottish Mountain Safety Group and other such organisations.

NHS Pay Levels

36. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on pay levels for national health service staff in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: The Government have accepted in full the recommendations of the review bodies on the pay of doctors, dentists, nurses, midwives, health visitors and the

professions allied to medicine in 1994-95. Negotiations on the pay of other staff on national terms and conditions are in progress in the Whitley councils. NHS trusts are free to negotiate locally on the pay of staff on trust terms and conditions of service.

Health Board Budgets

38. **Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the health board chairmen to discuss their budgets.

Mr. Stewart: My noble and learned Friend the Minister of State meets health board chairmen regularly to discuss a wide range of strategic matters affecting the management of the NHS in Scotland, many of which have implications for budgets. The next meeting will take place on 24 June 1994.

Scottish Economy

40. **Ms Rachel Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to meet the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss employment and the Scottish economy.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend and I have frequent contacts with the STUC on matters concerning the Scottish economy. We look forward to a continuing exchange of views.

Abattoirs

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many abattoirs are currently operating in Scotland; at what cost to public funds; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: There are 51 licensed red meat abattoirs currently operating in Scotland, 19 of which received assistance totalling £410,256 over the past 12 months from Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

Travel Concessions

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the groups of two or more local authorities which are jointly operating travel concession schemes under section 93 of the Transport Act 1985.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: From the information we have available, there are no joint concessionary travel schemes currently operating in Scotland.

Further Education

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he proposes to publish his report on the discharge of his duties for further education in Scotland as required under section 1 of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I am pleased to say that the report entitled "Further Education in Scotland 1993: Report by the Secretary of State for Scotland" has been published today and has been laid before each House of Parliament. Copies are available in the Library of the House.

On 1 April 1993, 43 further education colleges transferred from education authority management and funding to incorporated status, grant-aided by the Scottish Office. Preparations for incorporation were undertaken vigorously and enthusiastically and the transition went smoothly. A great deal of credit for this goes to college boards of management and staff.

The report shows that the first year of incorporation has been a successful one for the colleges and I look forward to working in partnership with them in the future.

Monklands District Council

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had on the dealings of Monklands district council with Lowlands Building Services (Scotland) Ltd., now in liquidation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: A copy of a letter sent to the hon. Member on 14 April 1994 by a shareholder of the company has been brought to my attention. I have asked my officials to look into the matter. I shall write to my hon. Friend in due course.

Fox Hunting

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the location of land and estates owned by his Department for which he has granted permission for fox hunts; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 21 April 1994]:* The Forestry Commission has issued a permit for fox hunting to take place on land at Clatto, Pitmedden and Weddersbie in Fife region and Torloisk in Tayside region. Fox hunts also occasionally use commission land at Carskeoch in Strathclyde region; at Craik, Newcastleton, Priesthaugh, and Wauchope in the Borders region; and at Cullendoch, Murrayton and Tinnisburn in the Dumfries and Galloway region.

Glanders and Farcy

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of cases of glanders and farcy in each year since 1985.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 25 April 1994]:* There have been no recorded cases of glanders or farcy in Scotland over this period.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Estate

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the relationship between the remit and responsibilities of the House of Commons Commission and of the domestic committees in respect of the provisions of services and facilities on the parliamentary estate.

Mr. Beith: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 25 May 1993 at column *486.*

TRANSPORT

Transport Research Laboratory

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give full details of all past and current collaborative research undertaken by the Transport Research Laboratory in the last 10 years.

Mr. Key: I have placed in the Library a list of collaborative research projects undertaken by TRL since 1 April 1991. Information in this form for prior years can only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list and give full details of all assets, including intellectual property rights, currently owned by the Transport Research Laboratory.

Mr. Key: As the information requested by the hon. Member relates to operational matters of the Transport Research Laboratory I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from John Wootton to Ms Joan Walley, dated 25 April 1994:

The Minister for Roads and Traffic has asked me to reply to your Question about the assets of the Transport Research Laboratory.

I enclose a copy of the TRL Asset Register which lists all assets valued at more than £5,000 and a further list of the licences issued since April 1991 for the use of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) held by TRL.

Under the terms of Framework Document TRL holds the IPR on behalf of the Secretary of State on research carried out for DOT and is responsible for exploitation of the IPR. When TRL contracts for work from other bodies, the ownership of the IPR is a matter of agreement between the parties.

London Heliport

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the members of the London heliport working group, indicating the date they joined the group and the organisation they represent.

Mr. Norris: The London heliport study was set up on 3 February 1992 and the working group members are as follows:

Department of Transport
H. B. Wenban-Smith *(Chairman)*—March 1993
Ms A. Monro—November 1992
M. C. Mann—February 1992
M. Wright—January 1993
A. Thorning—February 1993
M. Jackson—January 1993
T. J. Wellburn—March 1993
A. G. Jefreys—August 1993

Department of the Environment
R. Dickens—February 1992

Department of Trade and Industry
J. Daniels—March 1993
P. Novak—February 1992

Civil Aviation Authority
T. Bass—February 1992
S. Abrahams—February 1992

British Helicopter Advisory Board
Lord Glenarthur—February 1992
J. P. W. Friedberger CB, CBE—May 1992
G. R. J. Holder—February 1992

London Planning Advisory Committee
K. Gardner—February 1992
D. Dash—February 1992

Westland London Heliport
B. P. Cater—February 1992

British Merchant Fleet

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what new measures he now proposes to assist the British merchant fleet.

Mr. Norris: I refer the hon. Lady to the statement made to the House by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 21 April at columns 1077-78.

Glasgow Airport

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to introduce measures to regulate or reduce the level of aircraft under the flight path of Glasgow airport, specifically in relation to Paisley, Johnstone and Elderslie; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: None. Responsibility for noise mitigation measures lies with the airport's managers.

Overflying

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which western European capitals airlines are permitted to overfly in the normal course of commercial aviation.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 25 April 1994]:* Airlines from all states which are signatories to the 1944 Chicago convention and the 1944 international air services transit agreement or which otherwise possess bilaterally agreed overflying rights, are normally permitted to fly over western European capital cities. Such overflights will be subject to the air traffic control provisions of each state.

Buses, London

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of *(a)* London Transport buses and *(b)* London Transport bus routes are crew operated in each year since 1979.

Mr. Norris: The information is not available in the form requested. However, the following table shows the percentage of total miles operated by crewed buses on London Transport bus routes since 1979.

Percentage of miles operated by crewed buses

Year	Per cent.
1979	56
1980	55
1981	52
1982	52
1983	48
1984	46
1985	45
1986	33
1987	25
1988	15
1989	11
1990	8

Year	Per cent.
1991	10
1992	7
1993	7

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what *(a)* number and *(b)* percentage of bus routes operated by London Transport have had the length of their route (i) shortened and (ii) extended since 1979; and what was the average length of a bus route, in miles, in each year since 1979.

Mr. Norris: The information requested is not held centrally.

Railtrack Colours

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those stations where signs have been repainted or renewed in the colours of Railtrack; and what was the cost.

Mr. Freeman: Signs have been renewed at the following stations:

London: Victoria
Liverpool Street
Euston
Waterloo
King's Cross
Charing Cross
Paddington
London Bridge

Glasgow Central
Edinburgh
Leeds
Birmingham New Street
Manchester Piccadilly

The total cost amounted to £87,921·23.

Travel Concessions

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the groups of two or more local authorities which are jointly operating travel concession schemes under section 93 of the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested for England is as follows. Data are based on a survey carried out by the Department of Transport in March 1992.

(a) London

A joint scheme is operated by all the London boroughs.

(b) Metropolitan areas

No joint schemes as such. The six passenger transport authorities—Greater Manchester, Merseyside, South Yorkshire, Tyne and Wear, West Midlands and West Yorkshire—each operate schemes across the whole of their area.

(c) Shire areas

The following county councils each operate a scheme jointly with all their district/borough councils:

Cambridgeshire, Cheshire, Derbyshire, Devon, East Sussex, Essex, Hertfordshire, Humberside, Isle of Wight, Kent, Lancashire, Nottinghamshire, Shropshire and Suffolk.In addition, Bedfordshire, Leicestershire and Surrey

county councils each operate country-wide schemes, but with little direct involvement of their district councils.

The following councils operate joint schemes:

Bucks County Council and Milton Keynes Borough council.

Aylesbury Vale, South Bucks and Wycombe District councils.

Durham County Council jointly with Easington, Chester-le-Street, Derwentside, Durham city, and Sedgefield District councils.

The seven district councils in Norfolk.

South Oxfordshire, West Oxfordshire and the Vale of the White Horse district councils.

Newcastle under Lyme borough council and Stoke on Trent city council.

Six of the seven—not Crawley—district councils in West Sussex.

In addition:

Avon county council operates a scheme for blind people in Bristol and Bath.

Cleveland county council provides support towards some of its district council schemes.

Hazardous Cargoes

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to introduce a system of mandatory reporting and monitoring for ships with hazardous cargoes in the seas around the United Kingdom coast similar to the system introduced by France and Italy in the straits of Bonifacio.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 25 April 1994]:* The International Maritime Organisation approved in November 1993 a number of routing and reporting measures around the United Kingdom coast which are similar to those introduced for the strait of Bonifacio.

Shipping Industry

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received in the plans he announced on 15 December to assist the British shipping industry; and what plans he has *(a)* to publish the results of his consultation on proposals to allow non-United Kingdom officers to serve on British ships and *(b)* to increase the financial help available to British junior officers studying for higher certificates of competency.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 26 April 1994]:* We have received a few letters about my right hon. Friend's announcement of 15 December, mostly about the proposals to allow a greater use of non-United Kingdom officers on United Kingdom registered ships. Consultation on these proposals will be completed by the end of May. Individual comments will subsequently be available for inspection in the Department unless the respondent requests otherwise.

My right hon. Friend's announcement on 15 December last explained that assistance will be available for a pilot scheme lasting three years for junior officers studying for a second certificate of competency. A total of £1·5 million is available for this scheme in the first year, 1994-95.

Mr. Peter Gerosa

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state the nature and cost of consultancy contracts awarded by his Department in which Mr. Peter Gerosa is involved.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 26 April 1994]:* Mr. Gerosa is not involved in any current consultancy contract. However, Mr. Gerosa was contracted by the Department from 10 January to 31 March 1994 to carry out a review of primary and secondary legislation on vehicle standards. He was paid a total of £5,240·47 for that consultancy work.

Civil Aviation

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the procedure for members of the public to object to the Civil Aviation Authority about the re-issuing of an air tours operator's licence to a particular firm.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 26 April 1994]:* There is no formal procedure, but the hon. Member is free to write to the CAA at any time.

M25

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the sites of special scientific interest which are at risk as a result of Government plans to widen the M25.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 25 April 1994]:* This question relates to operational matters of the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive, Mr. Lawrie Haynes, to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Mr. L. Haynes to Mr. Cynog Dafis, dated 26 April 1994:

The Minister for Roads and Traffic, Mr. Robert Key, has asked me to write to you in reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the effect of M25 widening on Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

The Government's plans for widening the M25 are not currently expected to require any land from SSSI except possibly for a small area which may be needed from the Ockham and Wisley Commons SSSI which surround Junction 10.

DEFENCE

Rugby League

Mr. Tracey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in extending official recognition to rugby league as a sport in the armed forces.

Mr. Hanley: I am pleased to announce that rugby league is now on the same footing as other sports in the services. If a sport is to be able to compete for public and non-public funds it needs to have a properly constituted and recognised association. I am pleased to be able to say that both the Army and RAF Rugby League Associations have sought, and been granted, such recognition.

Glen Fruin Road, Dumbarton

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements have been made for Glen Fruin road, Dumbarton, when it is no longer required for use by his Department's construction traffic to the Clyde submarine base.

Mr. Hanley: Although my Department has agreed with the local planning authority and the landowner concerned to carry out work to remove the road and to reinstate the land when no longer required for construction traffic, it is now proposed with their agreement and that of the roads authority, to retain the road and meet the costs of bringing it up to adoptable standards for use by the public. As the proposed expenditure for this work is less than the estimated reinstatement costs, parliamentary approval to this new service has been sought in class I vote 3 of the 1994-95 main estimate. Pending that approval urgent expenditure estimated at £2,800,000 will be met by repayable advances from the contingency fund.

Military Survey Defence Agency

Sir Paul Beresford: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has begun the review of the Military Survey Defence Agency.

Mr. Hanley: A review of the agency status of military survey is now under way. As a Defence Agency, the performance of Military Survey will be evaluated and military survey activities will be subjected to the prior options review set out in the 1993 "Next Steps Review" —Cm 2430.

Comments and contributions from those with an interest in military survey and its work will be welcomed and should be sent by 31 May 1994 to military survey review team, Ministry of Defence, Room 257, Old War Office building, Whitehall, London SW1 2EU.

Defence Operational Analysis Centre

Sir David Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what key performance targets have been set for the chief executive of the Defence Operational Analysis Centre in 1994-95.

Mr. Aitken: The chief executive of the defence operational analysis centre at West Byfleet is responsible for providing the Ministry of Defence with advice on formulation of defence policy, military operational capability and future equipment requirements; this advice being derived from operational analysis studies and field trials. He has been set the following challenging key performance targets for 1994-95.

Service to customers

a. To complete 90 per cent. of the planned studies for customers within agreed timescales, and to seek progressive improvements in future years.
b. To complete 85 per cent. of the planned sites for customers within planned cost, and to seek progressive improvements in future years.
c. To complete 80 per cent. of studies within agreed time and cost.
d. To subject 100 per cent. of new major studies to a formal quality process, which will require peer review and measures of customer satisfaction, and to conduct a trial of a "total quality target" for studies for implementation in future years.
e. To respond to 90 per cent. of requests from customers for unplanned urgent advice within timescales negotiated at the outset, and to seek progressive improvements in future years.

Management systems

f. To implement a management information system linked to the full cost accounting system introduced last year and publish auditable accruals based accounts.

Efficiency

g. In 1994-95, to increase overall efficiency by 3 per cent. This includes a programme of market testing.

Royal Naval Stores Depot, Eaglescliffe

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much was spent in the last five years on refurbishing the computer room at RNSD Eaglescliffe.

Mr. Hanley: The air conditioning system in the computer building was replaced in 1993 at a cost of £251,000. Other maintenance carried out during the last five years has been of a routine and minor nature and the costs are not separately identifiable from the overall maintenance costs of the depot.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much is being spent on the construction of a new gatehouse at RNSD Eaglescliffe.

Mr. Hanley: A new gatehouse is being constructed at a cost of some £262,000, to replace the old police gatehouse which has been declared structurally unsound.

South Africa (Defence Force)

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role his military representatives are going to play in the integration of the new national defence force in South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The Transitional Executive in South Africa has made a formal request to the United Kingdom to provide a military team to assist with the integration of the new national defence force, which will be formed from all the existing forces in South Africa after the elections. Urgent consideration is being given to this request.

Mozambique Army

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress with his Department's involvement in training for the new unified Mozambican army; and if he will make a statement on any future involvement.

Mr. Hanley: In January this year the United Kingdom deployed a short-term training team to Mozambique to follow up earlier training of instructors from the new unified Mozambican army, FAMD, undertaken at Nyanga, Zimbabwe. Assistance provided by the United Kingdom currently takes the form of monitoring and advising the instructors in the training of their own troops. The Mozambican authorities have suffered some delay in the preparation of training camps and the arrival in them of trainees. A second STTT has now taken over from the first, whose personnel have other commitments, and full training commenced on 25 April.

Territorial Army

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence under which budget the Territorial Army's non-regular permanent staff are paid; and what is their cost.

Mr. Hanley: Territorial Army non-regular permanent staff are paid from three different budgets. They are *(a)* Commander In Chief United Kingdom Land Forces, CinC UKLF; *(b)* Assistant Chief of the General Staff, and *(c)* Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, VCDS. The total annual cost is some £27,000,000.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were members of the Territorial Army in England and Wales at the latest convenient date.

Mr. Hanley: As at 31 March 1994, there were 47,046 male and 8,018 female members of the Territorial Army in England and Wales.

Reserve Forces

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many personnel are members of the Army's long-term reserve.

Mr. Hanley: As at 1 March 1994, the membership of the Army's long-term reserve was 104,722.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sheep and Lamb

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) from which countries sheep have been imported into the United Kingdom in each year since 1990, and in the current year to date;

(2) what has been the total number of sheep imported into the United Kingdom in each year from 1990 and in 1994 to date.

Mr. Soames: Final date for years 1990 to 1992 are shown in the table. Data on numbers of live animals imported during 1993 are provisional and subject to change.

United Kingdom imports of sheep

	1990	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*[1]1994 (January)*
Whole world	119,217	98,032	234,487	72,939	3
of which:					
Republic of Ireland	118,382	96,666	204,230	72,935	
France	527	400	261	0	
Netherlands	135	90	392	4	
Belgium/Luxembourg	69	213	59	0	
Germany	13	0	5	0	0
Iceland	58	0	0	0	0
New Zealand	21	662	0	0	0
Canada	12	0	0	0	0
Australia	0	1	0	0	0
Nicaragua[2]	0	0	730	0	0
Iran	0	0	340	0	0
Japan	0	0	0	0	3

[1] No INTRASTAT data available for January 1994.
[2] Sheep import data estimated on reported weight of animals concerned.
Source: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what tonnage of lamb and sheep is reared in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland; what proportion of the total United Kingdom production is accounted for by each country; what tonnage of lamb and

sheep reared in each country is exported *(a)* live and *(b)* dead; and what proportion of total British lamb and sheep exports, live and dead, is accounted for by each.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 26 April 1994]:* The table provides estimates of the tonnage of lamb and sheep production for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland in 1993, together with the proportion of the United Kingdom total.

Both live and dead export figures are only available for the United Kingdom as a whole, and are not available separately for each country.

United Kingdom home fed sheep and lamb production 1993[1]
Estimate of breakdown by country

	'000 tonnes	Proportion of United Kingdom per cent.
England	197	52
Wales	79	21
Scotland	73	19
Northern Ireland[2]	31	8
United Kingdom	380	100

[1] Includes meat equivalent of live exports.
[2] Includes an estimate of unrecorded trade in live exports to Ireland.

Fisheries

Mr. Gill: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether a new fisheries derogation will be required before January 2003 to avoid equal access by all EU countries to British waters.

Mr. Jack: The provision for member states to retain sovereignty or jurisdiction out to 12 miles from baselines is in article 6 of regulation 3760/92. The provision expires on 31 December 2002 unless new arrangements are put in place.

Article 14 of the same regulation provides for the Commission to report on its implementation by 31 December 2001, and for the Council to take a decision by 31 December 2002 on any necessary adjustments, in particular with reference to the provisions which could follow the arrangements referred to in article 6.

The importance of the exclusive zone to all member states was again recognsied in the recently concluded Norwegian accession negotiations when it was agreed that the special interests of coastal communities dependent on fishing in the member states would be paid special attention when reviewing the present regime in 2002.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what definition of ecological risk will be used by the European Commission when deciding whether to allow a further derogation on the 2·5 km drift net limit for the French fishing fleet.

Mr. Jack: Under EC Council Regulation 3094/86, as amended, the derogation for certain French vessels to use drift nets of up to 5 km in length expired at the end of 1993. Any further derogation can only be proposed by the Commission, and adopted by the Council by qualified majority,

"in the light of scientific evidence showing the absence of any ecological risk linked thereto".

The United Kingdom will be pressing the Commission to state how this absence of risk can be demonstrated.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals she has put to the European Fisheries Commissioner on days at sea limitations.

Mr. Jack: None.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what specific steps he intends to take to protect salmon and seatrout in the Irish sea, the Irish box, and other waters adjacent to the United Kingdom when Portuguese and Spanish vessels are allowed to fish in these areas.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 26 April 1994]:* There is no need for any additional measures to protect salmon and sea trout stocks as a result of changed access arrangements for Portuguese and Spanish fishing vessels. Article 6 of EC Council Regulation 3094/86 already effectively prohibits fishing for salmon and sea trout in waters beyond 12 miles from member states' baselines, and Spanish and Portuguese fishing vessels have no access rights within 12 miles of United Kingdom baselines.

Epidemic Diseases in Livestock

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals she has to prevent increased epidemic disease in livestock; what warnings she has received from the British Veterinary Association of the threat of corridors of diseases from eastern Europe; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The Government consider the maintenance of this country's high animal health to be a matter of the utmost importance.

Ministry veterinary officials maintain close links with the British Veterinary Association and are aware of the concerns in relation to the introduction of disease by animals imported into the Community from eastern Europe. We are taking a number of measures to help prevent the introduction and spread of disease by imported farm livestock and equine animals. These are set out in my reply to the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) on 1 December 1993, *Official Report*, column 590. Such measures are kept under constant review and the level of checks are intensified in the light of perceived disease risks.

Bovine Somatotropin

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what financial assistance she has given to the private sector to facilitate research into the development and use of bovine somatotropin.

Mr. Soames: None.

Milk Quotas

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps she is taking to achieve equity on the application of milk quota controls in all European Union member states.

Mr. Jack: The Government are always concerned to ensure that member states comply with their EC obligations. The Commission has direct responsibility for ensuring that the Community rules are observed. If there is

evidence that other member states are not applying milk quota controls, we are always ready to take the matter up with the Commission. Indeed, we have challenged the Commission's latest proposal to award additional quota to Italy, Spain and Greece.

Agriculture Council

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Agriculture Council held in Luxembourg on 25 and 26 April; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: This meeting of the Council, at which I represented the United Kingdom, again discussed the Commission's proposals for farm support prices for 1994-95 and related measures. I made it clear that I continued to have a number of objections to the proposals, in particular to the suggested 1 per cent. cut in milk quotas. No decisions were reached and the Council will return to the subject at its May meeting.

There was a brief discussion, initiated by the German Minister, on bovine spongiform encephalopathy. The Agricultural Commissioner, Mr. Steichen, supported my view that current control measures fully safeguarded public health. The Commissioner and several member states also endorsed my insistence that any further measures must be consistent with scientific advice. He confirmed that it would be unacceptable for a member state to take unilateral measures which interfered with intra-Community trade.

The Council adopted a proposal to continue assistance to transporters of Greek fruit and vegetables affected by the war in ex-Yugoslavia. Denmark voted against and France abstained.

WALES

Local Government

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received prior to the publication of the White Paper, "Local Government in Wales: A Charter for the Future", *(a)* in favour of the exclusion of Llanelly from the then proposed Heads of the Valley unitary authority and *(b)* in favour of the inclusion of Llanelly in the proposed unitary authority of Powys.

Mr. Redwood: I will write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Health Authority Appointments

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) who are the members currently appointed to the Health Promotion Authority for Wales;

(2) who are the members currently appointed to national health service trusts;

(3) who are the members currently appointed to the district health authorities;

(4) who are the members currently appointed to the Welsh Health Common Service Authority;

(5) who are the members currently appointed to the family health service authorities in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is included in the list of public appointments in Wales, which is held in the Library of the House, and is regularly updated.

EC Additionality Rule

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his office's interpretation of the European Commission's rule on additionality following the issuing of advice to local authorities that their permitted capital spending has been reduced because of receipts of European regional development fund grants during 1992-93.

Mr. Redwood: No such advice has been issued. The Government place no limit on total capital spending by local authorities. All European regional development fund capital grants to local authorities on expenditure since 1 April 1993 are accompanied, automatically and in full, by an equal amount of supplementary credit approval. This accords with the Government's agreement with the European Commission.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the representations he received prior to his White Paper, "Local Government in Wales: A Charter for the Future", and the dates he received them, in favour of the inclusion of Wick, St. Bride's Major and Ewenny in the proposed unitary authority of the Vale of Glamorgan;

(2) if he will list the representations he received prior to his White Paper, "Local Government in Wales: A Charter for the Future", and the date he received them, in favour of the inclusion of Llanelly in the proposed unitary authority of Powys.

Mr. Redwood: I will write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Voluntary Bodies (Government Funding)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the total amount of Government funding disbursed by each voluntary body for the latest available financial year in respect of each district council area in Wales and for Wales as a whole;

(2) what was the total amount of Government funding disbursed by each voluntary body for the latest available financial year in respect of each county council area in Wales and for Wales as a whole.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Public Bodies (Government Funding)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the amount of Government funding received by each public body to which he makes appointments in respect of each district council area in Wales and for Wales as a whole.

Mr. Redwood: The information is not available in the form requested.

The amount of Government funding received by executive non-departmental bodies, advisory bodies, tribunals and NHS bodies is shown in "Public Bodies 1993" which is available in the Library of the House.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are his proposals for the future of the Forestry Commission in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Ministers are considering the report of the Forestry Review Group and will make an announcement in due course.

Housing

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet representatives of council tenants in Drury and Buckley to discuss damp, rotten windows and the need for central heating; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I have no plans to do so. It is for the local authority to deal with repairs and improvements to its housing stock.

Travel Concession Schemes

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the groups of two or more local authorities which are jointly operating travel concession schemes under section 93 of the Transport Act 1985.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

South Glamorgan
South Glamorgan county council and Cardiff city council.
South Glamorgan county council and the Vale of Glamorgan borough council.

Mid Glamorgan
Mid Glamorgan county council and the borough councils of Cynon Valley, Merthyr Tydfil, Ogwr, Rhondda, Taff Ely and the district council of Rhymney Valley.

West Glamorgan
West Glamorgan county council, Swansea city council and the borough councils of Lliw Valley, Neath and Port Talbot.

Dyfed
Dyfed county council, the district councils of Ceredigion, Preseli Pembrokeshire, South Pembrokeshire and the borough councils of Llanelli and Dinefwr.

Gwent
Gwent county council and the borough councils of Monmouth Newport, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen and Islwyn.

Health Promotion Authority

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the budget for the Health Promotion Authority for Wales in 1994-95.

Mr. Redwood: Subjecct to parliamentary approval in 1994-95, £3,573,000 will be made available to the Health Promotion Authority for Wales, which includes £325,000 for national health promotion projects and £5,000 to fund the authority's capital expenditure.

The allocation will be conditional upon satisfactory completion of an annual performance review.

Homelessness

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what resources he has given to each of the housing authorities in the county of Clywd, borough and district, to combat homelessness.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Supplementary credit approvals for specific homelessness schemes have been made available as follows:

	£
1991-92	
Alyn and Deeside	153,000
Rhuddlan	182,000
1992-93	
Alyn and Deeside	30,000
Delyn	155,000
Rhuddlan	30,000
1993-94	
Wrexham Maelor	300,000

This does not include spending on homelessness from within the general provisions for these councils.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest estimate of the transitional costs of local government reform in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my hon. Friend to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) on 25 April, *Official Report*, column *49*.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Executive Agencies

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement about possible executive agency status for the Crown Prosecution Service, the Serious Fraud Office and the Treasury Solicitor's Department.

The Attorney-General: I announced on 6 December 1993 that consideration will be given to whether the Crown Prosecution Service, the Serious Fraud Office and the Treasury Solicitor's Department should become executive agencies under the "next steps" initiative. Prior options studies are being undertaken to establish whether agency status or other options would be appropriate. I would welcome comments from interested parties. Comments should be sent by 1 July 1994 to:

Mr. S. Guy
Crown Prosecution Service
50, Ludgate Hill
Room 323
London
EC4M 7EX

Mr. A. Hollis
Treasury Solicitor's Department
Queen Anne's Chambers
28, Broadway
London
SW1H 9JS

Ms J. Rowe
Serious Fraud Office
10-16, Elm Street
London
WC1X 0BJ

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 28 April 1994

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Performance Targets

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Attorney General if he will announce the key performance targets for executive agencies in his Department for 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I informed the House on 29 March, *Official Report*, columns *16-17*, that I would be establishing the Government Property Lawyers as an executive agency of the Treasury Solicitor's Department on 1 April 1993.

The agency has had a successful first year. It has achieved the key performance targets which I set it. I congratulate the chief executive and his staff.

I have set the following targets for the agency which are similar to those for 1993-94 but contain significant improvements:

For 1994-95: to recover the full operating cost of the agency; to achieve 6,000 new instructions from its clients; to increase the number of completions effected to an average of 83 per case-holder, equivalent to a total of 6,050; to maintain and improve the quality of service, in particular by keeping the proportions of cases completed satisfactorily (i.e. without requiring rectification by reason of any fault of the agency) on or before the target date at or above 99·5 per cent.

Over the three year period of the strategic plan: to achieve a steady reduction in operating costs of an average of 2·5 per cent. per year in real terms.

I wish the chief executive and his staff a further successful year.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what amounts were paid in the last 10 years for which figures are available to *(a)* solicitors, *(b)* barristers and *(c)* by way of disbursements in relation to criminal legal aid in the magistrates and higher courts.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Table *(a)* gives a breakdown for criminal cases tried in the magistrates courts during the period 1983-84 to 1992-93. Detailed information on payments to solicitors and barristers in the higher criminal courts is available only for the last nine years and is set out at table *(b)*. A breakdown of disbursements in the higher criminal courts is only available from 1988-89.

Table (a)

£ million

	Solicitors	*Barristers*	*Disbursements*
1983-84	54·991	4·846	2·483
1984-85	60·104	5·307	2·790
1985-86	71·227	6·857	3·347
1986-87	76·313	7·309	3·649
1987-88	99·372	9·914	4·626
1988-89	110·422	11·903	5·312
1989-90	130·785	14·849	6·214
1990-91	152·495	15·650	7·055
1991-92	186·043	17·562	8·791
1992-93	175·689	16·776	8·652

Table (b)

£ million

	Solicitors	*Barristers*	*Disbursements*
[1]1984-85	33·723	34·316	—
[1]1985-86	36·360	38·932	—
[1]1986-87	42·601	49·225	—
[1]1987-88	47·591	52·494	—
1988-89	47·407	65·335	6·535
1989-90	53·381	74·095	7·570
1990-91	60·982	87·881	8·949
1991-92	72·955	103·789	10·726
1992-93	91·752	117·082	13·094

[1] Disbursements included in totals for solicitors and barristers.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list all the courts and the tribunals in England and Wales for which legal aid, subject to eligibility, *(a)* is and *(b)* is not available.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Under the Legal Aid Act 1988, and subject to the various eligibility tests, legal aid is available as follows:

Civil legal aid is available for proceedings before:

The House of Lords in the exercise of its jurisdiction in relation to appeals from the courts of England and Wales;
the Court of Appeal;
the High Court;
any county court;
specified family proceedings in the magistrates courts;
the Employment Appeal Tribunal and the Lands Tribunal;
a commons commissioner appointed under section 17(1) of the Commons Registration Act 1965;
the Restrictive Practices Court under part III of the Fair Trading Act 1973, and any proceedings in that court in consequence of an order made, or undertaking given, under that Part of that Act.

However, it is not available for those proceedings specified in part II of schedule 2 to the Legal Aid Act.

Criminal legal aid is available for proceedings before:

The magistrates courts;
the Crown Court;
the criminal division of the Court of Appeal or the Courts-Martial Appeal Court;
the House of Lords in the exercise of its jurisdiction in relation to appeals from either of those courts.

Assistance by way of representation—ABWOR—is available for:

Specified civil proceedings in the magistrates courts;
a party, at a hearing in any proceedings in a magistrates' court, who is not receiving and has not been refused representation in connection with those proceedings, where authority has been given by the court;
specified criminal proceedings in magistrates courts where the client has not previously received and is not otherwise receiving representation or ABWOR in connection with the same proceedings;
a party, at a hearing in any proceedings in a county court, who is not receiving and had not been refused representation in connection with those proceedings, where authority is given by the court;
a person in connection with an application for a warrant of further detention, or for an extension of such a warrant, made in respect of that person to a magistrates court under section 43 or 44 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

proceedings before Mental Health Review Tribunals under the Mental Health Act 1983;
a discretionary life prisoner whose case is referred to the parole board under sections 34(4) or (5) or 39(4) of the Criminal Justice Act 1991;
a prisoner who has been permitted by the governor or equivalent to be legally represented in proceedings before him.

Legal aid is not available for proceedings before any other venue. However, those within the relevant financial eligibility limits may receive advice and assistance from a solicitor under the green form scheme prior to a hearing.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what were the total receipts in the last 10 years for which figures are available in relation to awards of costs, contributions and otherwise in relation to *(a)* legal aid in criminal cases in the higher courts, *(b)* legal aid in criminal cases in the magistrates courts, *(c)* magistrates courts duty solicitor schemes, *(d)* police station duty solicitor schemes and *(e)* advice on criminal matters under the legal aid scheme.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Total payments to the legal aid fund in respect of costs, contributions and other receipts in respect of criminal legal aid during the last 10 years are as shown. No costs, contributions or other receipts are received in respect of magistrates courts and police station duty solicitors schemes.

Year	*Higher Criminal Courts (£m)*	*Magistrates Courts (£m)*	*Green Form (£m)*
1983-84	0·581	1·410	1·622
1984-85	0·626	1·240	2·182
1985-86	0·629	1·132	2·692
1986-87	0·763	1·298	3·014
1987-88	0·910	1·756	3·580
1988-89	0·710	2·113	3·930
1989-90	0·750	2·649	3·758
1990-91	1·000	3·254	4·044
1991-92	1·000	2·033	4·494
1992-93	1·265	3·267	4·896

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the total net cost in the last 10 years for which figures are available of *(a)* legal aid in criminal cases in the higher courts, *(b)* legal aid in criminal cases in the magistrates courts, *(c)* magistrates courts duty solicitor schemes, *(d)* police station duty solicitor schemes and *(e)* advice on criminal matters under the legal advice scheme.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The table shows the total net cost of criminal legal aid expenditure in the last 10 years for which figures are available, broken down in the form requested.

£ million

Year	*Higher Courts*	*Magistrates' Courts*	*Duty Solicitor magistrates' courts*	*Duty Solicitor police station*	*Green Form*
1983-84	58·905	60·765	—	—	35·858
1984-85	67·398	66·816	0·537	—	44·139
1985-86	74·663	80·219	3·368	0·568	51·716
1986-87	91·067	85·772	3·915	16·618	49·918
1987-88	99·176	112·266	4·879	23·183	56·885
1988-89	118·586	125·273	5·300	25·534	54·132
1989-90	134·206	148·828	6·522	30·969	62·430
1990-91	156·821	171·646	7·071	37·031	72·016
1991-92	186·470	209·996	7·989	53·615	95·165
1992-93	220·404	197·393	10·156	61·439	118·746

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the amounts and the proportions of legal aid fund moneys paid to *(a)* solicitors, *(b)* barristers and *(c)* Queen's counsel for each of the last five years in (i) criminal, (ii) family, and (iii) other civil matters.

Mr. John M. Taylor: It is not possible to distinguish between the amounts paid specifically to Queen's counsel from the total sum paid to all barristers in family and other civil proceedings. The amounts and proportions of final legal aid bill payments to solicitors and barristers, excluding disbursements, for each of the last five years for which figures are available in (i) criminal, (ii) family and (iii) other civil matters, are as follows:

Gross expenditure on criminal legal aid

	Solicitors (£ million)	*Proportion of criminal expenditure (per cent.)*	*Barristers (£ million)*	*Proportion of criminal expenditure (per cent.)*	*Queen's Counsel (£ million)*	*Proportion of criminal expenditure (per cent.)*	*Disbursements (£ million)*	*Proportion of criminal expenditure (per cent.)*	*Total criminal expenditure (£ million)*
1988-89	197·6	68·9	77·2	26·9	10·2	3·5	11·9	4·1	286·7
1989-90	232·2	69·3	88·9	26·6	11·6	3·5	13·8	4·1	334·9
1990-91	269·5	69·3	103·5	26·6	14·7	3·8	16·0	4·1	389·1
1991-92	335·4	70·4	121·4	25·5	16·0	3·4	19·5	4·1	476·2
1992-93	356·9	69·6	133·9	26·1	24·4	4·8	21·7	4·2	512·5

Gross expenditure on legal aid for family matters

	Solicitors (£ million)	Proportion of family expenditure (per cent.)	Barristers (£ million)	Proportion of family expenditure (per cent.)	Disbursements (£ million)	Proportion of family expenditure (per cent.)	Total family expenditure
1988-89	133·6	83·6	14·3	8·9	12·0	7·5	159·9
1989-90	140·8	83·5	15·0	8·9	12·9	7·6	168·7
1990-91	160·5	82·7	18·4	9·5	15·2	7·9	194·2
1991-92	198·7	82·4	24·1	10·0	18·4	7·6	241·2
1992-93	247·7	83·8	32·1	10·9	15·8	5·3	295·7

Gross expenditure on other civil legal aid

	Solicitors (£ million)	Proportion of other civil expenditure (per cent.)	Barristers (£ million)	Proportion of other civil expenditure (per cent.)	Disbursements (£ million)	Proportion of other civil expenditure (per cent.)	Total other civil expenditure
1988-89	95·8	71·8	20·6	15·4	17·1	12·8	133·5
1989-90	116·9	71·8	25·5	15·7	20·3	12·5	162·7
1990-91	142·4	72·5	29·8	15·2	24·2	12·3	196·4
1991-92	199·8	72·5	43·9	15·9	32·0	11·6	275·7
1992-93	269·2	73·0	56·7	15·4	42·9	11·6	368·8

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many solicitors or solicitors' offices and barristers received payments during 1992-93 in the ranges *(a)* £1 to £5,000, *(b)* £5,001 to £10,000, *(c)* £10,001 to £20,000, *(d)* £20,001 to £40,000, *(e)* £40,001 to £60,000, *(f)* £60,001 to £80,000, *(g)* £80,001 to £100,000, *(h)* £100,001 to £120,000 and *(i)* £120,001 and over in respect of payments made from the legal aid fund.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The number of solicitors' offices receiving payments within these ranges in 1992-93 was as follows:

	Number
£1-£5,000	3,001
£5,001-£10,000	873
£10,001-£20,000	1,180
£20,001-£40,000	1,623
£40,001-£60,000	1,134
£60,001-£80,000	718
£80,001-£100,000	549
£100,001-£120,000	412
£120,001 and over	1,827

The Legal Aid Board does not keep records in the form requested of payments to barristers, and it could be produced only at disproportionate cost. However, the following information is held on the numbers of barristers receiving payments within given ranges in 1992-93:

	Number
£1-£1,000	1,553
£1,001-£2,000	681
£2,001-£4,000	893
£4,001-£6,000	728
£6,001-£8,000	617
£8,001-£10,000	499
£10,001-£12,000	385
£12,001-£14,000	349
£14,001 and over	2,115

Judges

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many advertisements and in which publications, and at what cost, the Lord Chancellor has placed for new judges since his speech at the Lord Mayor's dinner for judges on 7 July 1993; and how many responses he has received to these advertisements.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No advertisements have so far been placed for judges. However, eight advertisements have been placed for other judicial appointments since 7 July 1993, details of which are shown in the table. The total cost was £663.54.

Work in currently in progress on the development of detailed proposals for the introduction of the measures announced in the Lord Chancellor's speech to Her Majesty's judges, and an announcement will be made soon.

Advertisements placed for judicial appointments since 7th July 1993

Office	Publication	Number of applications received
Deputy Social Security Commissioners/Deputy Child Support Commissioners (Scotland)	Journal of the Law Society of Scotland	38
	Scots Law Times	
Deputy Taxing Masters	The Law Society Gazette	25
	Bar News	
Mental Health Review Tribunals (Legal Members—part-time)	The Law Society Gazette	49
	Bar News	
Part-time Immigration Adjudicators (Scotland)	Journal of The Law Society of Scotland	49
	Scots Law Times	

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the total amount spent on judges' lodgings in England and Wales for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The table sets out expenditure on judges' lodgings since 1987-88.

	£ million
1987-88	2·3
1988-89	2·9
1989-90	2·7
1990-91	3·3
1991-92	3·7
1992-93	[1]5·5
1993-94	[2]

[1] £5·0 million excluding building purchase.
[2] Not yet available.

The Department took over responsibility for collating information on expenditure from the Property Services Agency in 1988 and in 1990 took over full responsibility for the maintenance and administration of the lodgings. For this transitionary period the costs are based on estimates. Figures for the years prior to 1987-88 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Photo-identity Cards

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what estimate he has made of how much crime would be reduced by the introduction of national photo-identity cards for those aged 12 years and above;

(2) what estimate he has made of how much car-related crimes would be reduced by the introduction of *(a)* photo-identity cards and *(b)* photo-driving licences.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No such estimates have been made.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans the Home Department has and what studies it has undertaken in respect of the introduction of a photo-identity card for all United Kingdom subjects aged 12 years and above.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Government currently have no plans to introduce a photo-identity card for all United Kingdom subjects aged 12 years and above. The last formal study undertaken of this question was completed in 1989. This is, however, an issue which we consider important and keep constantly under review.

Police National Computer

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to employ workers abroad to programme and load the police national computer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I assume that the hon. Member has in mind the conversion of the national collection of criminal records into digital form for entry on the police national computer. My right hon. and learned Friend expects to make an announcement on this matter shortly.

Blakenhurst Prison

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 21 April, *Official Report*, columns *643-44*, on what date the settlement was reached between United Kingdom Detention Services Ltd. and the Prison Service regarding the amount of money to be withheld under the terms of the contract to manage Blakenhurst prison, in the light of the incident on 24 February; what sum of money has been withheld from United Kingdom Detention Services Ltd. as an appropriate financial remedy; and how this amount was arrived at.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 28 April 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about Blakenhurst prison.

The matter was finalised on 28 March. The sum withheld was £41,166·90, exclusive of VAT, which in our judgment represented the extent to which the required level of service had not been delivered in February. The areas where the service was not considered to be up to the required standard were outlined in Derek Lewis' letter of 12 April *Official Report*, column 3.

Nuclear Weapons

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what responsibilities agencies accountable to his Department are required to assume in the event of an accident or incident involving United States nuclear weapons in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No agencies involved in an incident involving United States nuclear weapons are accountable to my Department. The response of the emergency services is a local one and is determined by the local circumstances.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether local police forces are required to assume primary responsibility in responding to an accident or incident involving United States nuclear weapons in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The role of the police in the response to an incident, including one involving United States' nuclear weapons in the United Kingdom, is one of co-ordinating the local level response of the emergency services and other agencies.

ANZAC Day

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes in the restrictions on the movement of vehicular traffic in Whitehall were made on 25 April ANZAC day, in 1994, as against those made in previous years; what consultations took place about the changes, and by and with whom; what was his involvement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that consultations took place between his officers and representatives of

the New Zealand and Australian high commissioners on the arrangements to be made for ANZAC day. As this year it fell on a weekday during the parliamentary session, the commissioner was required by the sessional order to keep the streets leading to Parliament free and open. It was possible to close Whitehall for the whole of the ceremony in 1993 and 1992 only because Parliament was not sitting on either of the days in question.

Cremations

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest available annual figure for the number of people cremated in England.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Annual cremation figures are collected by the Federation of British Cremation Authorities and were most recently published in volume 37 of the federation's journal "Resurgam". This indicates that 386,673 cremations took place in England in 1993.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what law or guideline governs the payment of money to doctors for the signing of authorisation for the cremation of a deceased person; how many doctors are required to authorise each cremation; and if he will publish the guidance issued by his Department in relation to this matter.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The main requirements governing cremation procedures in England and Wales are contained in the Cremation Regulations 1930, as amended by the Cremation Regulations 1952, 1965, 1979 and the Cremation (Amendment) Regulations 1985. All applications for cremation have to be authorised by the medical referee for the crematorium, who must be a registered medical practitioner of not less than five years' standing with suitable experience and qualifications. There is no statutory basis for the payment of money to medical referees for the authorising of cremation; in the case of municipal crematoriums, the fees are set by the local government management board following negotiation with the British Medical Association. For privately run crematoriums, there is a BMA-recommended fee.

Law Commission

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to ask the Law Commission to review the law on hearsay evidence and evidence of previous misconduct, as recommended by the Royal Commission on criminal justice.

Mr. Howard: I have today asked the Law Commission to undertake a major review of the law of evidence. I have suggested that the terms of reference should be to consider the law of England and Wales relating to hearsay evidence and evidence of previous misconduct in criminal proceedings; and to make appropriate recommendations, including, if they appear to be necessary in consequence of changes proposed to the law of evidence, changes to the trial process.

Racial Discrimination

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been achieved with respect to publishing an annual report to assist those in the criminal justice system in avoiding racial discrimination within that system, as laid down in section 95 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: A publication on race and the criminal justice system was issued in October 1992 along with a similar publication on gender. In 1993 the Home Secretary's statutory responsibilities under section 95, which deals with information on race, gender and costs, were discharged by distributing information on the costs of the criminal justice system. Additionally, an information sheet on race specifically for the Judicial Studies Board was published.

A further general publication on race will be distributed shortly.

Male Rape

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is now his proposed time scale for the introduction of an offence of male rape; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Government have no plans to create such an offence.

Prison Service Chaplaincy

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to strengthen the Prison Service chaplaincy with an increase in prison numbers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Harry Greenway, dated 28 April 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about plans to strengthen the Prison Service Chaplaincy in view of the increase in the prison population.

It is for individual governors to agree with their area managers how best available resources can be deployed to meet the religious and other needs of prisoners in their establishments. In general, the Prison Service looks to more effective and efficient use of the resources it has and a re-ordering of priorities in order to meet its goals, including the goal of providing value for money for the taxpayer.

Deportation Orders

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many deportation orders have been served in *(a)* the first quarter of 1993, *(b)* the third quarter of 1993 and *(c)* the first quarter of 1994.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The available information relates to deportation orders made rather than those served. There were 359 and 297 such orders made in the first and third quarters of 1993 respectively. Corresponding information for the first quarter of 1994 is not yet available. Deportation orders are not made in respect of persons removed under the supervised departure procedures; there were 363 and 300 such removals in the first and third quarters of 1993 respectively.

Prisoner Interviews

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the procedures that must be followed for a newspaper to be allowed to interview a prisoner being held in a prison establishment in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 28 April 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the procedures that must be followed for a newspaper to interview a prisoner being held in a prison establishment in England and Wales.

Prison Service Standing Order 5A 37 states that visits to inmates by journalists or authors in their professional capacity should not in general be allowed. Any interview which is allowed can take place only with the consent of both the governor and prisoner concerned.

Sheehy Inquiry

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 2 December, *Official Report*, column *665-66*, regarding the cost of the Sheehy inquiry *(a)* how many days Miss Jenny Rumble spent in actual discussions in Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America; at what cost; and what were her qualifications to be sent on such duties and *(b)* how many days Mr. E. Caines spent in discussions in Australia; and at what cost.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The dates of all the visits which were undertaken by the members and the secretary of the inquiry were published in the appendices of volume 2 of the inquiry's report. The visits included discussions with the New South Wales police, the Australian federal police in Canberra and the New Zealand police service. Details of the overall expenditure of the inquiry were given in my reply to the hon. Member on 2 December 1993, at column *665-66*. The management of expenditure within these sums was the responsibility of the inquiry.

Police Posts (Privatisation)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to prevent criminals from participating in, and benefiting from, his plans to privatise police posts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In any case where work previously done by police officers is contracted out, the Government take steps in order to ensure that the appropriate security procedures are in place.

Surveillance

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement regarding the confidentiality of citizens who allow the police to use their houses for surveillance.

Mr. Maclean: I can assure the hon. Member that the police go to great lengths to safeguard the identities of those who allow them to use their houses for surveillance. The Government are determined to do whatever they can to ensure that people who assist the police should not face intimidation. Courts already have discretion to allow witnesses to conceal their addresses from the public and the defendant. A new offence of witness intimidation, contained in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, will make it easier to prosecute anyone who seeks to intimidate or take revenge on witnesses, jurors or any person assisting the police.

Immigration

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many individuals from Somalia have been granted leave to enter Britain since January 1991; and how many dependent relatives have been allowed to accompany them;

(2) how many individuals from the former Yugoslavia have been granted leave to enter Britain since January 1991; and how many dependent relatives have been allowed to accompany them.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 27 April 1994]:* Information on the total numbers, including dependent relatives, given leave to enter the United Kingdom is given in the table. The figures include persons who have applied for asylum at ports—and their dependants—and who have been granted asylum or exceptional leave. They exclude persons granted temporary admission. The total numbers of dependent relatives are not available separately.

Nationals of Somalia and the former Yugoslavia given leave to enter the United Kingdom

Number of journeys

Nationality	*1991*	*1992*	*[1]1993*
Somalia	3,650	5,500	4,160
Former Yugoslavia	59,800	49,900	46,200

[1]Figures are provisional.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Human Rights

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list each of the international and European codes, conventions and treaties to defend human rights to which Her Majesty's Government are a party, indicating in each case whether Her Majesty's Government have signed or ratified it, and the derogations involved; and in which court the provisions are justiciable.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The main international human rights instruments to which the United Kingdom is party —that is, which it has ratified—are as follows:

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
Covenant against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination.
Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women.
Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The main European human rights treaties to which the United Kingdom are party are:

European Convention on Human Rights (including Protocol 1).
European Social Charter.

European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

The United Kingdom has signed but not ratified protocol No. 4 to the European convention on human rights.

The provisions of these treaties as such are not justiciable in courts in the United Kingdom. The provisions of the European convention on human rights are justiciable in the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

The United Kingdom is at present derogating from the international covenant on civil and political rights and the European convention on human rights with respect to certain periods of detention under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989.

CSCE

As a participating state in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe the United Kingdom subscribes to the political undertakings of the CSCE, including those relating to human rights.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Coal Industry

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what further consultations he proposes with interested industry groups on the revised draft of the interaction agreement, the coal access agreement and the model licensing regulations.

Mr. Eggar: The Department of Trade and Industry has consulted interested parties on the draft model Coal Authority licensing documents. We intend to publish in the coming weeks revised versions of those documents, which take account of the representations made.

We have no plans to carry out a further round of consultations.

Companies House Agency

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place the consultants' report on the Companies House agency in the Library; whether he is reviewing the need for other directorships of the board member to be disclosed; and when he expects to announce the future shape of Companies House organisation.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The future of Companies House remains under consideration. It would not be appropriate to publish the consultants' advice in advance of the Government's decision.

Information about other directorships held by company directors will continue to be available to searchers at Companies House. Technical developments however make it possible to drop the requirement for companies to supply such information on the annual return. This reform is one of the measures for which, subject to consultation, the Government intend to use the deregulation order-making power in the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill once it is enacted.

Helplines

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Donohoe) of 10 March, *Official Report*, columns *335-36*, how many callers there were to each of the helplines listed in each of those years.

Mr. Eggar: The numbers of calls each year were as follows:

	Numbers
Enterprise Initiative Helpline	
1987-88	44,971
1988-89	43,413
1989-90	38,496
1990-91	37,606
1991-92	26,833
1992-93	31,009
1993-94	26,608
Environmental Enquiry Point	
1990-91	5,052
1991-92	6,735
1992-93	6,441
1993-94	2,962
Innovation Enquiry Line	
1991-92	7,980
1992-93	7,430
1993-94	9,584

Oil and Petrol

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much *(a)* a barrel of crude oil and *(b)* a gallon of petrol cost in (i) 1970 and (ii) 1994 in (1) cash terms and (2) 1994 prices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: A barrel of crude oil cost the equivalent of some 75p—$1·80 per barrel—in 1970 which is equivalent to about £6 in 1994 prices. In January 1994, a barrel of crude oil was £9·38—$14·01 per barrel. A United Kingdom gallon of 4 star petrol, including taxes and duties, was on average some 33p in 1970 and £2·60 in 1994 prices. In January 1994, 4 star petrol cost on average about £2·52.

Insolvency

Mr. James Hill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to review the law on insolvency.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Insolvency Service has recently consulted on proposed changes to the company voluntary arrangement and administration order procedures in the Insolvency Act 1986 and the responses are being carefully considered. I have no plans at present for further reviews.

Accreditation Services

Mrs. Browning: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to review the status of the National Measurement Accreditation Service and the National Accreditation Council for Certification Bodies.

Mr. McLoughlin: On 14 April, in announcing the Government's conclusions on the future of the DTI laboratories, I said that separate consideration would be given to the future of the National Measurement Accreditation Service—the NAMAS—which is currently part of the National Physical Laboratory—the NPL. The report by consultants KPMG Peat Marwick recommended that NAMAS should be separated from the NPL and consideration given to its merger with the National Accreditation Council for Certification Bodies—the NACCB. NAMAS accredits testing and calibration

laboratories; the NACCB advises the DTI on the accreditation of bodies which perform certification of quality systems, products and personnel.

The NACCB is currently a council of the British Standards Institution, a royal charter body, having been established under a memorandum of understanding between the DTI and BSI. The NACCB's status has itself been under review and the Government, the BSI and the NACCB agree that the link with the BSI should now be severed and the NACCB given a new independent status. In this context also there have been calls for a merger of the NACCB with the NAMAS.

The Government see a number of benefits in creating a merged body, including better policy co-ordination, a higher profile for accreditation, the pooling of expertise, and advantages internationally. Before proceeding further, however, I have decided to seek the views of all interested parties on a merger, and my Department is issuing a consultation document on the subject today.

The Government remain committed to a strong and effective national accreditation system. A new merged body would need to maintain impartiality, integrity, and national authority, in order to assure the continuing status of accreditation both at home and abroad. I am not convinced, however, that the new body would need to be within Government in order to do this. My objective is for the new body to be given the greatest degree of freedom from Government control which would be consistent with the attainment of our policy objectives, and with the need for integrity and impartiality.

The consultation document seeks comments on the appropriate relationship between a merged body and Government. It also seeks views on a number of related matters, including whether accreditation should be open to organisations not based in the United Kingdom.

I have today placed copies of the consultation document in the Libraries of both Houses. Responses to the document are requested by 15 June. I will report the outcome of the consultation exercise, and the Government's conclusions, to the House in due course.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Sporting Bodies (Reorganisation)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will give an estimate for the cost of work carried out by Government Departments, between 9 July 1991 and 30 April 1994, on formulating plans for the reorganisation of sporting bodies in the United Kingdom; and what is his estimate for the likely cost of that re-organisation.

Mr. Sproat: Those involved within Government in formulating plans for the future structure of British sport will have been involved in a wide range of other activities between 9 July 1993 and 30 April 1994. It is not possible to estimate the time and cost attaching to any particular activity. As to the estimated costs of any fresh proposals, I cannot anticipate the announcement which we propose to make shortly.

D-day Anniversary

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what submissions to his Department have been made by the Royal British Legion concerning arrangements for the commemoration of the D-day anniversary.

Mr. Sproat: The secretary-general of the Royal British Legion wrote to me on 19 April following our meeting earlier that day to discuss my Department's programme of civilian events to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the D-day landings.

National Sustainability Strategy

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on his approach to environmental matters, in the light of the Government's national sustainability strategy, published in January.

Mr. Sproat: My Department contributed significantly to the formulation of the United Kingdom sustainable development strategy, which reflects our commitment to preserving the heritage for the enjoyment of present and future generations, and for the encouragement of sustainable leisure policies and practices.

Museums

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will publish an estimate of the value at current prices of the records and artifacts claimed by the national railway museum in each year since it opened in York under the provisions of section 144 of the Transport Act 1968.

Mr. Sproat: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) whether he intends *(a)* to keep the national railway museum in York, *(b)* to continue to treat it as the most important national collection of railway-related records and artifacts and *(c)* to continue to fund it accordingly;

(2) what plans he has to remove the national railway museum, in York, from its place in the national museum of science and industry and establish it as a national museum in its own right.

Mr. Sproat: There are no plans to move the national railway museum from York or to change its status. It will remain a part of the national museum of science and industry.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage by how much he plans to increase the Government grant-in-aid to the national railway museum in the current financial year and in future years to compensate for the museum's loss of the right to claim redundant railway equipment at no cost from certain railway undertakings.

Mr. Sproat: The grant in aid to the national museum of science and industry for the current financial year and over the next two years was announced in November last year. It included an addition of over £2 million to the previously announced figures in order to allow for the replacement of

the motive power depot at the national railway museum in York. There are no present plans to increase the funding further.

The Railway Heritage committee was set up under the 1993 Railways Act to oversee disposal of artefacts and records as they pass from British Rail ownership. I am sure that the museum's representation on the committee will continue to enhance the reputation it has earned as the outstanding museum in this area of our heritage.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many people visited *(a)* the science museum in Kensington, *(b)* the national railway museum in York and *(c)* the national museum of the moving image in Bradford in the last financial year; and if he will show in a table (i) the total amount and (ii) the cash amount per visitor (x) received in Government grant in aid and (y) generated from visitors by each of these museums in the same financial year.

Mr. Sproat: The number of visitors to these museums was as follows:

	Financial year	
	1993-94	*1992-93*
Science Museum (South Kensington)	1,269,345	1,223,702
National Railway Museum	479,414	535,575
National Museum of Photography, Film and Television	832,286	764,166
Wroughton	90,120	55,280
Totals	2,671,165	2,578,723

The national museum for science and industry receives a single grant in aid from the Government. In 1992-93 —the latest year for which accounts are available—this grant-in-aid was £21,878,000. It is not earmarked between the four component museums—science museum, national railway museum, national museum of photography, film and television and Wroughton. The NMSI aggregates both the grant in aid and its other income for these four component museums in order to provide a total income pool. From that total the board of trustees of NMSI allocates expenditure to the four museums according to priorities determined by the board.

The income generated by visitors to three component museums in 1992-93 was as follows. Figures exclude income from Wroughton which is received from hire of the site to outside organisations:

	Gross income generated by visitors (£ thousands)	*Income per visitor (£)*
Science Museum (South Kensington)	2,469	2·07
National Railway Museum	1,669	3·12
National Museum of Photography, Film and Television	928	1·22

PRIME MINISTER

Community Health Councils

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister on what dates, and where, in the last five years he has held discussions with officers of community health councils.

The Prime Minister: I frequently meet a wide range of people involved in the national health service.

My right hon. Friend the Minister for Health, and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health, spoke at the Association of Community Health Councils for England and for Wales at their annual conferences in 1992 and 1993 respectively. Ministers in both Scotland and Northern Ireland have also made keynote speeches at equivalent conferences.

Lockerbie Disaster

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what representations Her Majesty's Government have received concerning the extradition of the persons alleged to have committed the murders of the passengers and crew of Pan Am 103 and residents of Lockerbie in December 1988; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: We have received no recent representations concerning the extradition of the two accused, who are Libyan nationals. It is now well over two years since warrants were issued for their arrest.

We have given comprehensive assurances as to the fairness of a trial in Scotland and the pre-trial conditions for the accused. We and our Security Council partners have made it clear that the Libyan Government should comply with the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and hand the two accused over for trial without further delay.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 28 April.

The Prime Minister: This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

VJ-day

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Prime Minister what consultations he has had or proposes to have regarding proposals to commemorate the 50th anniversary of VJ-day.

The Prime Minister: The Ministry of Defence will consult the principal veterans' associations about the nature of commemorative events to mark the end of the second world war. Consultation will also be appropriate with other nations and other voluntary or charitable organisations who may wish to be involved.

Sir Robin Butler

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister what advice Sir Robin Butler has furnished to Government Departments when issuing decisions relating to local or European dimensions.

The Prime Minister: Sir Robin Butler's office recently reminded departments of the standing guidance to civil servants relating to the period preceding local and European elections. The guidance emphasises the political neutrality of the civil service and is as follows:

"Local and European election campaigns differ from general elections in that there is no prospect of a change of government consequent upon the elections, and the business of government

continues as usual. However, there is an increasing tendency by all political parties to approach local and European elections from a national point of view, with nationally produced material, and departments will wish to follow consistent principles when responding to requests for information in connection with election campaigns. They should also exercise particular care in issuing decisions with a local or European dimension, and in undertaking new paid publicity campaigns during the period of a local or European election.

The following general principles should be observed during the period of a local or European election:

(a) as at other times, civil servants should not be asked to engage in activities which call into question their political impartiality, or to give rise to the criticism that people paid from public funds are being used for party political purposes; special advisers should be asked to avoid circulating material on party paper within departments;

(b) there should be even-handedness in meeting information requests from candidates from different political parties; such requests and responses should be channelled through the appropriate Minister's private office;

(c) organisations and members of the public (including election candidates) should be provided, on request, with factual information which is unclassified and does not require disproportionate time or effort to produce. As from 4 April 1994, such requests should be handled in accordance with the principles laid down in the Code of Practice on Government Information;

(d) particular care should be taken on the timing and announcement of sensitive decisions which have a bearing on local or European matters. It may be better in some cases to defer announcements until after the election, but each case should be considered on its merits; the key point is to avoid criticism that action by officials might influence the political outcome;

(e) special care should be taken in respect of proposals for new paid publicity campaigns, which should not invite criticism that they are being undertaken for party political purposes."

Blaby (Visit)

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Prime Minister when he is next intending to pay an official visit to Blaby.

The Prime Minister: I have no immediate plans to do so.

War Medals

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Prime Minister if he will now reconsider the question of the award of campaign medals for those involved in the invasion of Europe in 1944 and for those involved in the bombing campaign over mainland Europe in the period from 1940.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 27 April 1994]:* His Majesty King George VI approved the following awards. All personnel who took part in the invasion and subsequent operations in north-west Europe, between 6 June 1944 and 8 May 1945, are eligible for the France and Germany Star. British aircrew who undertook operations over the continent of Europe between 3 September 1939 and 5 June 1944 are eligible for the Air Crew Europe Star, provided they have qualified for the 1939-45 star.

Public Appointments

Mr. Byers: To ask the Prime Minister which organisations have recently been contacted by the public appointments unit asking it to consider nominations for public appointments.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 27 April 1994]:* To increase the supply of names of people who might be willing to serve on public bodies, and to supplement those already on its database, the public appointments unit within the Cabinet Office began, in September 1993, a three-year programme of actively seeking more names. Letters from the director of the unit are being sent to universities, professional and voluntary bodies, companies, trade unions, women's groups and organisations representing the ethnic minority communities and disabled people.

As has been made clear on previous occasions, nominations are welcome from hon. Members and from any other appropriate quarter at any time.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Information Super-highways

Mr. Bryan Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects the CCTA Government centre for information systems study into the development of information super-highways to be completed; and what plans he has to publish the results of the study.

Mr. Waldegrave: The CCTA report on the possible development of a national network infrastructure—digital super-highway—for the United Kingdom was received on 22 April 1994. The report will be published by the end of May and copies will be placed in the Libraries of the House.

TREASURY

VAT (Domestic Fuel)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to exempt from value added tax on domestic electricity charges that part of the bill levied with respect to nuclear generation of power.

Sir John Cope: No. Such a policy would be impractical, confusing for consumers and contrary to EC VAT agreements.

Orimulsion

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what decision was made on the combined nomenclature code for orimulsion at the latest meeting of the harmonised system committee of the Customs Co-operation Council.

Sir John Cope: The harmonised system committee of the Customs Co-operation Council decided during its meeting earlier this month that in future orimulsion should be classified under harmonised system heading 27.14.

Tax and National Insurance

Sir David Knox: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish figures showing national insurance contributions and income tax liabilities, less child benefit where appropriate, as a percentage of gross earnings in each year since 1979-80 including estimates for 1994-95 for single people, single-wage married couples without children and with two children, and two-wage married couples without children and with two children assuming earnings/joint earnings equal to average male

earnings, one-and-a-half times average male earnings and twice average male earnings in each year, and that the ratio of earnings between husband and wife is 60:40.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is in the table.

Income tax and national insurance contributions[1] expressed as a percentage of earnings

Multiple of average earnings[2]	*Single*	*Married[3] 1 earner*	*Married[3] 1 earner 2 children*	*Married[3] 2 earners*	*Married[3] 2 earners 2 children*
1978-79					
1	31·5	27·8	20·9	19·8	12·9
1½	33·3	30·8	26·2	26·4	21·7
2	33·7	31·4	27·9	29·6	26·2
1979-80					
1	29·7	26·3	18·9	19·5	12·1
1½	30·8	28·5	23·6	25·1	20·3
2	30·8	28·9	25·2	28·0	24·3
1980-81					
1	30·7	27·3	20·8	21·3	14·8
1½	31·6	29·4	25·0	26·4	22·1
2	32·0	29·7	26·5	29·0	25·8
1981-82					
1	32·2	29·3	22·5	23·8	17·1
1½	33·5	31·4	26·9	28·5	24·0
2	34·5	23·2	28·9	31·1	27·7
1982-83					
1	33·0	29·8	22·8	24·1	17·1
1½	34·3	32·2	27·5	29·0	24·3
2	34·5	32·3	28·8	31·4	27·9
1983-84					
1	33·0	29·6	22·4	23·5	16·4
1½	34·2	32·0	27·2	28·7	24·0
2	34·0	31·7	28·1	31·3	27·7
1984-85					
1	32·7	29·2	22·0	22·9	15·7
1½	33·9	31·5	26·8	28·3	23·5
2	33·9	31·5	27·9	31·0	27·4
1985-86					
1	32·6	29·0	22·0	22·1	15·2
1½	33·7	31·3	26·7	28·0	23·4
2	33·9	31·5	28·0	30·8	27·3
1986-87					
1	31·9	28·5	21·9	21·6	15·0
1½	32·9	30·6	26·2	27·6	23·2
2	33·3	30·9	27·6	30·2	26·9
1987-88					
1	30·6	27·6	21·4	21·4	15·2
1½	31·0	29·0	24·8	26·8	22·6
2	32·4	29·9	26·8	29·2	26·1
1988-89					
1	29·1	26·3	20·7	20·6	15·0
1½	28·9	27·0	23·2	25·6	21·8
2	30·6	28·3	25·5	28·0	25·2
1989-90					
1	28·7	25·9	20·8	20·2	15·0
1½	28·4	26·6	23·1	25·1	21·6
2	30·5	28·3	25·7	27·8	25·2
1990-91					
1	28·2	25·5	20·8	19·8	15·0
1½	28·1	26·2	23·1	24·5	21·3
2	31·1	28·9	26·6	26·6	24·3
1991-92					
1	28·1	25·6	20·7	19·6	14·7
1½	28·2	26·5	23·2	24·4	21·2
2	30·5	28·5	26·1	26·8	24·3
1992-93					

Multiple of average earnings[3]	Single	Married[2] 1 earner	Married[2] 1 earner 2 children	Married[2] 2 earners	Married[2] 2 earners 2 children
1	27·6	25·2	20·2	18·8	13·8
1½	27·7	26·1	22·8	23·9	20·5
2	30·8	28·9	26·4	26·2	23·7
1993-94					
1	27·6	25·3	20·3	19·0	14·0
1½	28·3	26·2	22·9	24·0	20·6
2	31·2	29·4	26·8	26·3	23·8
1994-95					
1	28·6	26·8	21·9	20·4	15·5
1½	29·4	28·3	25·0	25·3	22·0
2	32·1	31·2	28·7	27·4	25·0

[1] Income tax payments are calculated on the assumption that the households receive no tax reliefs other than the standard allowances and only have income from employment. Child benefit has been subtracted from the total of income tax and national insurance contributions for couples with two children. All earners are assumed to pay class 1 national insurance contributions at the contracted-in rate.

[2] Since 1990-91, husbands and wives have been taxed independently. Previously the tax liabilities of couples depended on their joint income. To permit comparisons with earlier years, the table therefore shows income tax and national insurance contributions paid by a married couple as a proportion of their joint income, assuming, as in the earlier years, that where both partners are earners, the husband and wife share the relevant multiple of earnings in the ration 60:40.

[3] Average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of all full-time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. These are assumed to be £347·70 a week in 1992-93, £359·90 in 1993-94 and £374·30 in 1994-95, based on illustrative earnings growth assumptions of 3½ per cent. in 1993-94 and 4 per cent. in 1994-95.

Note: At the level of average earnings the real take home pay of each of the family types has increased by about £83 per week between 1978-79 and 1993-94.

Taxation of Benefits

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the loss of revenue, for each taxable social security benefit, if all benefits were tax free.

Mr. Dorrell: Available estimates are in the table which shows the reductions in revenue for each social security benefit at 1994-95 levels. Each benefit has been treated as the top slice of the recipient's income. No one whose annual income is less than £3,445 pays income tax.

Reductions in income tax if benefits made tax free

Benefits	Reduction in revenue £ million
Retirement pension	1,830
Widows' benefits	100
Invalid care allowance	10
Unemployment benefit and income support paid in lieu of unemployment benefit	300
Statutory sick pay[1]	160
Statutory maternity pay	100

[1] Assuming that all payments by employers would be taxable.

Fuel Accounts

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state the loss to the Exchequer in value added tax as the result of the advance payments of fuel accounts.

Sir John Cope: The overall level of prepayments is estimated to be close to the working assumptions adopted in the March 1993 Budget estimates. There is therefore no reason to expect that the revenue projected from the VAT change will not be achieved.

Undated War Loan

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much undated war loan is outstanding; what proportion of its original real value remains; and if he will redeem it before the 50th anniversary of the end of the war.

Sir John Cope: There is approximately £1·9 billion of war loan outstanding which was first issued during the first world war. This stock is marketable and the Government have no plans to redeem it.

Coal and Gas Imports

Mr. Alnger: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what rates of duty are imposed on imported coal and gas from each country of origin.

Sir John Cope: There are no import duties payable on imports of coal or of natural gas regardless of country of origin.

Inflation

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the link between the inflation rate and the level of employment.

Mr. Portillo: My assessment of the evidence is that the best way to improve employment prospects over the long term is to create the conditions for sustainable economic growth by securing permanently low inflation.

VAT Exemptions

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to extend the VAT exemptions, which apply to building work on houses, to residential boats, whether or not they have an engine.

Sir John Cope: I have no plans to change the existing VAT treatment which applies to houseboats.

ENVIRONMENT

Special Protection Area Status

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the sites under consideration for special protection area status in the United Kingdom; and if he will place a map of those sites in the Library.

Mr. Atkins: A review of potential special protection areas in the United Kingdom is currently being carried out in the light of the most recent scientific knowledge and information. When this review is completed a list of these areas, together with a pinpoint map, will be placed in the Library.

Departmental Publications

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for how many regular publications he was responsible in 1993-94; what was their circulation; and how many were obtainable by subscription.

Mr. Gummer: My Department published 317 titles which included research and annual reports, technical and statistical reports and consultation papers in 1993-94. Eighty-three of these were produced regularly either annually or as part of a series.

Of the regular titles, 63 were published by HMSO which reports total sales of 103,100 copies. Twenty of its publications were available on subscription and the rest on its standing order service which allows customers to register an interest in a particular subject and receive titles on those subjects as published.

The balance of 20 were regular departmental publications. A total of 5,310 copies were sold to 401 subscribers, interested organisations and individuals.

Unfit Dwellings

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest estimate provided by the English house condition survey for the potential cost required to repair, renovate and improve unfit dwellings in the private sector; what is the Department's current funding for mandatory grants; what was the Department's funding 10 years ago; how he plans to counterbalance any discrepancy; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: From data in the English house condition survey the potential cost of remedying unfitness in the private sector is estimated to be £4 billion. Responsibility rests primarily with the owner, but grant assistance is available from local authorities subject to a means test. The Government provide Exchequer grant for 60 per cent. of local authorities' expenditure on private sector renewal. A total of £260 million is allocated for this purpose in 1994-95. The amount spent on mandatory renovation grants will reflect the applications actually received. Total expenditure by local authorities on intermediate grants—the only mandatory grants for house renovation for which financial information was recorded separately—totalled £79·9 million in 1984-85.

Retirement Housing

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to endorse the regulations laid down in the Association of Retirement Housing Managers code of practice as the criteria by which the housing association tenants ombudsman should judge owner-occupied sheltered accommodation which is managed by a registered housing association.

Sir George Young: The Secretary of State has powers to approve codes of practice designed to promote good management for residential property. As yet no code has been formally submitted to him. Registered housing associations are required to satisfy the standards set by the Housing Corporation in the tenants guarantee or the leaseholders guarantee. The Housing Association tenants ombudsman will have regard to these standards and to other recognised guidance on good practice when considering any complaint submitted to him from a tenant or leaseholder of a property owned or managed by a registered housing association. It is, however, for the ombudsman to determine the handling of any individual case.

Dogs

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to approve new byelaws designed to hold owners more accountable for their pets in respect of dog faeces on streets and public footways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Local authorities in England and Wales already have powers to adopt "poop-scoop" byelaws which make it an offence for owners not to clear up after their dogs in designated areas. The issue of whether dog fouling should be dealt with in the same way as litter in national law is being looked at by my Department's advisory group on litter as part of its review of litter legislation. Its report is expected shortly.

Exercise Diver Mist

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many personnel from his Department were involved in Exercise Diver Mist; in what capacities they served; and what was the cost to his Department of this involvement.

Mr. Atkins: Eight staff from the Department of the Environment, including Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, were involved in Exercise Diver Mist at a cost of approximately £17,500. Their roles covered planning, representation of the Department's activities and assessment.

Residential Moorings

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to change the guidance to planning authorities in the establishment of new residential moorings.

Mr. Baldry: Planning policy guidance note 3 "Housing" contains our current policy. It advises planning authorities to bear in mind the special needs of houseboat dwellers. We have no plans to change this guidance.

Nuclear Reprocessing Plants

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why Her Majesty's Government did not accept the PARCOM recommendation 93/5 concerning

increases in radioactive discharges from nuclear reprocessing plants at the meeting of the Paris Commission in June 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to my answer to the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) on 7 March, *Official Report*, column *44*.

Sustainable Development

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what deadlines he has set for completion of the national review of capacity and capacity-building requirements, needed for the United Kingdom national sustainable development strategy;

(2) what discussions he has had with relevant interest groups to establish national capacity and capacity-building requirements for national sustainable development strategies in accordance with the Government's commitments under chapter 37 of Agenda 21.

Mr. Atkins: Chapter 37 of Agenda 21 is about capacity building in developing countries. Its recommendations are therefore not directly relevant in the domestic policies of a developed country like the United Kingdom. Pages 34 to 36 of our 1994 "Report to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development" give a summary account of the work we are doing to support capacity building in developing countries.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has made to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the consideration of ecological sustainability of economic activity at the meeting of the Group of Seven Finance Ministers in Washington on 24 April.

Mr. Atkins: The Government have made it clear in "Sustainable Development, the UK Strategy," published in January, that they intend to take account of sustainable development in the formulation of their policies.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many responses he has had following consultations on the proposed amendment to schedule 4 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; and how many responses were in favour of amendment.

Mr. Atkins: I refer to the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 25 April, *Official Report*, column *40-41*. Of the 192 responses received, 45 were fully or partly in favour and 27 neither supported nor objected to the proposals.

We consulted our scientific advisors, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, in preparing our proposals. They accepted that the conservation status of the sparrowhawk, kestrel and common buzzard will not be significantly adversely affected at present by the proposals.

Exchange of Experience Programme

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities from *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Wales, *(d)* Northern Ireland and *(e)* the United Kingdom have participated in the exchange of experience programme sponsored by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions; what are the corresponding amounts of (i) financial support received from the European Commission and (ii) total spending under the programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not collected by central Government. The exchange of experience programme is managed in the United Kingdom independently of central Government and participation in it is a matter for individual authorities.

Ministerial Visit (Liverpool)

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the recent visit of the Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction to Liverpool.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 27 April 1994]*: I visited Merseyside on 22 April. I went to Kirkby where I was impressed by the continuing strides being made in regenerating the housing stock; I met some of the partners involved in an exciting project at Westvale to provide new homes in Kirkby. I visited Stockbridge village to see the refurbished estate and discuss with Stockbridge village trust its ideas for the wider economic regeneration of the area. I also had a useful discussion with the Merseyside local authorities' co-ordinating committee about European structural funds matters and agreed the importance of a strong local partnership to take the objective 1 programme forward for the maximum benefit of the people of Merseyside. I also met representatives of the housing corporation to discuss its role in improving housing on Merseyside.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Bosnia

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will specify the detailed steps that need to be taken under the dual control arrangement in Bosnia before an air strike can take place; who makes the final decision; and what time delay is envisaged in securing agreement with NATO, the United Nations and other parties.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Under the terms of the 22 April North Atlantic Council decision, either NATO or United Nations commanders can initiate a request for air strikes. Both must agree before air strikes can take place. Authorisation for air strikes must then be given by the United Nations Secretary-General's special representative in the former Yugoslavia, Mr. Akashi. There is no requirement for any further consultation.

European Court

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 21 April, *Official Report*, column *609*, what costs would be involved to his Department in calculating the legal costs involved in the representation of the United Kingdom's interests in the infraction proceedings since 1 January 1985 and the consequential legal charges against the United Kingdom as a result of the decisions of the court; what consideration has been given to recording such costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: To attempt to obtain accurate figures for the legal and consequential costs of the infraction proceedings brought before the court by the Commission would involve detailed research work across several Government Departments. The cost of such an exercise would exceed the disproportionate cost threshold for written parliamentary questions.

We will continue to minimise the costs incurred by adverse European Court of Justice decisions by ensuring that Britain complies with its treaty obligations.

Rwanda

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will propose to the United Nations Security Council that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda mandate and presence in Rwanda should be changed or strengthened.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: United Nations Security Council resolution 912 of 21 April gives UNAMIR a mandate to act as an intermediary in an attempt to secure a ceasefire as well as assist in the resumption of humanitarian relief operations and monitor and report on developments. The Security Council has agreed to keep the mandate of UNAMIR under review.

Mozambique

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the demobilisation and rehabilitation programmes of former soldiers in Mozambique are on schedule to be completed before the election.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: After a delay, demobilisation started on 10 March. It can be completed before the elections if the Mozambican Government and RENAMO show the necessary political will. The rehabilitation programme has also begun, but is scheduled to continue for another 18 months.

EDUCATION

School Transport

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what guidance he gives to local education authorities regarding the measures that they take to ensure that vehicles contracted to transport children to and from school are roadworthy and that the crews are safe drivers.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has national responsibility for vehicle safety matters, including policy on vehicle construction and driver qualifications.

However, the Department for Education offered general advice on school transport to all local education authorities in a circular letter on 21 January 1994. A copy is in the Library. It reminded authorities that the home-to-school transport which they provide or arrange must carry pupils in reasonable safety and comfort. It also advises authorities to encourage contractors to observe the school transport safety code of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, which issued with the endorsement of the Secretary of State in 1991. Copies were distributed to all education authorities and schools.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Mozambique

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are being taken to reform the police force in Mozambique on similar lines to the military and to train FRELIMO and RENAMO supporters together; and what British or European Union funds are being used for this purpose.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The police and the armed forces in Mozambique are separate. There are no current plans to change the composition of the police. However, a United Nations police contingent of 1,300 has started to arrive in Mozambique to monitor police activity and to observe the run-up to the elections. It is being funded in the UN budget to which we and other members contribute. Neither we nor the EC have plans to help with police training.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contributions are being made by Britain and the European Union to an education for democracy process in Mozambique.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There is an education for democracy component in the United Nations Development Programme's electoral assistance project. We are contributing £600,000 and the European Commission about £8·6 million to the project.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current contribution of each of the specialist development organisations of the United Nations to Mozambique.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I will write to the hon. Member when I receive the relevant information from the United Nations.

Aral Sea

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment his Department has made of the level of pollution of the Aral sea and scope for aid to redress the situation.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: This issue has been the subject of several recent international studies. Alleviating the situation is a priority for the know-how fund in Kazakhstan. The United Kingdom will be represented at the NATO science programme workshop on critical environmental issues of the Aral sea basin in Tashkent in May and at the World bank's Aral sea conference in Paris in June. These discussions will help us to identify what help we might offer through the environmental know-how fund.

Aid Organisations

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give instructions in future that local staff who are employed by British aid organisations should be evacuated on the same basis as British nationals if their life is endangered by remaining.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No. We cannot give any undertaking to evacuate local people from their own country on the same basis as British nationals.

Sustainable Development

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans the Minister for Overseas Development has to attend the meeting of the United Nations Sustainable Development Commission in New York in May.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 21 April at column *612*.

TRANSPORT

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the choice of a route for the channel tunnel rail link at Ashford.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the route of the channel tunnel rail link at Pepper Hill, Northfleet, in Kent.

Mr. Macgregor: I have today announced my decisions on the route of the new channel tunnel rail link through Ashford and at Pepper Hill.

In January I announced a route for the new channel tunnel rail link that would be safeguarded, but that further study and consultation had been requested by the local authorities and Members of Parliament on route options at Ashford and Pepper Hill. Union Railways compared three options at each location, consulted on them and reported to me at the end of March. In deciding on the route at each location that will be safeguarded, I have also taken account of all the representations that have been received. Copies of the Union Railways' reports will be placed in the Library of the House.

The extra consultation has fully justified that decision. I am now able to announce that at Pepper Hill I have decided that the chosen route will be the one around the housing estate, in cut and cover under the A2. It is technically feasible, environmentally acceptable, does not cost more and has wide public support locally, including from my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold).

At Ashford I have decided that the central route is the best solution. It is environmentally acceptable and has the best financial return. I have also taken particular account of the perception of my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford, local authorities and business representatives, in Kent and Sussex, that the economic development of Ashford and east Kent will be enhanced by ensuring that the route serves Ashford international passenger station as directly as possible. The central route affects some housing and commercial premises, but it will be optimised in the next few weeks before it is safeguarded so as to minimise the impacts as far as possible.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what representations he has received from those affected by the decision not to tunnel the channel tunnel rail link through parts of East London; and if he will make a statement;

(2) on how many occasions he has visited sites and met representatives of local residents and businesses affected by the decision not to tunnel the channel tunnel rail link under parts of east London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Before the January announcement of the final route of the new rail link both my right hon. Friend and I visited those areas affected by the proposed surface route through east London. Since the January announcement my right hon. Friend and I have received a number of representations from those affected by the surface route, and met representatives from the London borough of Barking and Dagenham.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to meet local residents and businesses affected by the decision not to tunnel the channel tunnel rail link under parts of east London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Extensive consultations on the route of the new rail link have been carried out by Union Railways for the Government. My right hon. Friend and I have no present plans for separate meetings with local residents and businesses. However, those who are directly affected by the route of the rail link will have every opportunity to make their case to the Select Committee that will consider the hybrid Bill for the rail link when it is introduced.

Railway Operating Licences

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidance and what general authority to grant railway operating licences he has given to the Rail Regulator under the Railways Act 1993.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend issued guidance and a general authority to the Rail Regulator on 31 March to come into effect on 1 April at the same time as the relevant provisions of the Railways Act 1993 came into force. Copies have been placed in the Library.

Section 4(5)(a) of the Act imposes a duty on the regulator in exercising his functions under part I of the Act, until 31 December 1996, to take into account guidance given to him from time to time by the Secretary of State. Guidance has been given to the regulator to exercise his functions in a way that will facilitate the achievement of the Government's rail privatisation objective of securing as soon as is reasonably practicable that rail services are provided by the private sector. The guidance given is in respect of moderation of competition, the form of access agreements, the structure and level of access charges, access to British Rail's freight only light maintenance depots, the achievement by Railtrack of its financial regime and the terms and conditions of licences.

The general authority is given to the regulator under section 8(1)(b) of the Act. Broadly, it authorises the regulator to grant licences to private sector operators and to subsidiaries of the BR board but not to any other public sector operator. It sets out the conditions such licences must, may or must not contain.

Tankers (The Minch)

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many tankers transited the Minch during the period January 1992 to January 1994 on a monthly basis; and, of the total for each year, how many were laden and with what cargo.

Mr. Norris: Information is not available in the form requested. Information available from reports made to Stornoway coastguard since February 1993 is set out in the table.

Month	Number of tankers	Number of tankers in ballast	Laden tankers Under 10,000 GT	Laden tankers Over 10,000 GT
February	6	3	2	1
March	24	16	3	5
April	17	14	2	1
May	17	10	7	0
June	20	12	4	4
July	26	15	9	2
August	23	12	10	1
September	28	12	13	3
October	25	13	10	2
November	29	17	9	3
December	40	28	10	2
Total	255	152	79	24

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many reports of laden tankers transiting the Minch between January 1992 to January 1994 were investigated by his Department; and what reasons were given by vessels for transiting the Minch instead of the recommended deep water route.

Mr. Norris: Since February 1993, the Department investigated 24 reports of laden tankers over 10,000 gross tons using the Minch. Ten did so because of adverse weather, three were in ballast and four were found not to be in the Minch at all. Evidence suggests that the remainder were not following the recommendations agreed internationally in November 1993 and the appropriate action has been taken with the owners.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will analyse the data from the tankers in the Minch voluntary reporting scheme, including details of the source of the report, ship's routing, and corroborating reports and estimate the proportion of ships transiting the Minch that are covered by the voluntary reporting scheme; and when his Department intends to publish these data.

Mr. Norris: The Department receives reports made to the local coastguard on tankers in the Minch. Reports are analysed and where necessary follow up action is taken. At this time the Department cannot draw conclusions about total tanker traffic in the Minch.

The Department will consider in due course how best to publish the information it has gathered taking account of any recommendations emerging from Lord Donaldson's inquiry.

Stramore Head (Incident)

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the involvement of coastguard and other search and rescue services in an incident on 19 April at Stramore head, Pembrokeshire.

Mr. Norris: The incident involved the fishing vessel FV Kingfisher, which suffered engine failure off Stumble head on 19 April 1994, following which the craft drifted on to rocks and sustained damage, as a result of which it became flooded.

The owner-skipper contacted HM Coastguard MRSC Milford Haven on VHF, following which the RNLI lifeboat at Fishguard was launched to go to his assistance. In addition, rescue co-ordination centre at Plymouth was asked for a helicopter, which was despatched from RAF Chivenor. In the event, the helicopter was not required and was released.

The owner-skipper was recovered from the rocks below Stumble head by Fishguard lifeboat, which then pumped out the fishing vessel and towed it to port.

Rail Privatisation

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the benefits to be expected by passengers following the privatisation of the railways.

Mr. Freeman: The involvement of the private sector in taking responsibility for provision of passenger services will bring additional capital into the railway industry above that provided by the taxpayer and will also introduce new management skills and innovation aimed at meeting more fully the demands of the passenger.

Public Transport Budget

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of the United Kingdom's transport budget is currently spent on public transport; and what are the comparable figures for other EU countries.

Mr. Freeman: In 1994-95, nearly 40 per cent. of the Government's total transport expenditure will be on public transport. Comparable figures for other EU countries are not readily available.

Research Establishments

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what date he announced the official scrutiny of Government research establishments; if he will list those establishments which came under the terms of that review; and what criteria he used to include research establishments in that review.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have been asked to reply.

In May 1993, the White Paper "Realising our Potential: A Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology" announced the Government's intention to undertake a scrutiny of the public sector research establishments. I announced the terms of reference on 2 February and the bodies to be covered on 3 March at columns *809-11*. The scrutiny is concentrating primarily on research establishments parented by civil departments and related laboratories in the research council system.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Red Meat Industry

Mr. Gill: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many directives and regulations affecting the red meat industry are currently in force; and how many have been rescinded during the lifetime of this Parliament.

Mr. Soames: The principal statutory instruments and European Community directives affecting the red meat industry in Great Britain which are currently in force number 18 and seven respectively. Some 20 statutory instruments have been rescinded or part-rescinded during the lifetime of this Parliament. Details are as follows:

The hygiene regulations affecting the red meat industry in Great Britain are the Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1992—SI 1992 No. 2037—which implement directives 91/495/EEC—part—91/497/EEC and 91/498/EEC. Schedule 23 of these regulations lists the 20 regulations or orders, or parts thereof, revoked in the lifetime of this Parliament.

Directive 88/408/EEC on the financing of meat inspection was replaced in December 1993 by directive 93/118/EEC; proposals for implementing this directive will be issued for consultation shortly. The current legislation on meat inspection charges is the Fresh Meat and Poultry Meat (Hygiene, Inspection and Examination for Residues) (Charges) Regulations 1990—SI 1990 No. 2494—and the Farmed Game Meat (Hygiene and Inspections) (Charges) Regulations 1993—SI 1993 No. 1369.

The Meat (Sterilisation and Staining) Regulations 1982 —SI 1982 No. 1018—as amended and the parallel Scottish legislation have been reviewed as part of the deregulation initiative and will shortly be replaced. The Bovine Offal (Prohibition) Regulations 1989—SI 1989 No. 2061—as amended have also been reviewed and are to be retained.

Directive 90/675/EEC deals with importation of red meat and other animal products from third countries. The relevant GB regulations, principally the Importation of Animal Products and Poultry Products Order 1980—SI 1980 No. 14—as amended, the Products of Animal Origin (Import and Export) Regulations 1992—SI 1992 No. 3298 —and the Products of Animal Origin (Third Country Imports) (Charges) Regulations 1992—SI 1992 No. 3299 —are scheduled for review during 1994.

Directive 93/119/EEC, on the protection of animals at the time of slaughter or killing, repeals directive 74/577 with effect from 1 January 1995. GB regulations to implement the new directive will replace four existing statutory instruments. These are the Slaughter of Animals (Humane Conditions) Regulations 1990—SI 1990 No. 1242—the Slaughter of Animals (Humane Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1990—SI 1990 No. 1240 (S 137) —the Slaughter of Pigs (Anaesthesia) Regulations 1958 —SI 1958 No. 1971—and the Slaughter of Pigs (Anaesthesia) (Amendment) Regulations 1984—SI 1984 No. 1310.

The Beef Carcase (Classification) Regulations 1991— SI 1991 No. 2242—provide for the administration and enforcement of the Community system of classification of beef carcases as required by article 3 of Council Regulation (EEC) No. 1186/90.

The Pig Carcase (Grading) Regulations 1988, as amended—(SI 1988 No. 1180—provide for the administration and enforcement of the Community system for grading pig carcases in slaughterhouses and implement Council Regulation (EEC) No. 3220/84.

The Processed Animal Protein Order 1989—SI 1989 No. 661—requires processors of animal protein to register with Agriculture Departments and take samples of their product and test them for salmonella.

The Animal By-Products Order 1992—SI 1992 No. 3303—which implements directive 90/667/EEC, lays down rules for the disposal and processing of animal waste.

The Waste Food Order 1973—SI 1973 No. 1936—lays down rules for the processing of waste food not covered by SI 1989 No. 661 or SI 1992 No. 3303.

The Meat (Treatment) Regulations 1964—SI 1964 No. 19—prohibit the addition to raw and unprocessed meat of certain colour—enhancing additives which might deceive the consumer as to the freshness of the meat. They have been reviewed and are to be retained.

In addition to this list, Council Regulations (EEC) Nos. 805/68, 3013/89 and 2759/75, implemented by subsidiary Commission legislation provide the framework for the common agriculture policy in respectively the beef, sheepmeat and pigmeat sectors. These are directly applicable in the United Kingdom and cover such subjects as intervention purchases and sales, imports and subsidised exports and the reporting of market prices.

Sheep Disease

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is her Department's assessment of the periods for which caseous lymphadenitis can persist in the environment; and what is the risk to other animals or people.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The organism which causes caseous lymphadenitis can be introduced to the environment only by the discharge from ruptured abscesses in heavily infected animals and it would be rare for animals to reach that stage of infection without action being taken. The organism can survive for up to eight weeks on surfaces out of the sunlight and for up to eight months in soil under appropriate conditions. Infection is spread through contact with skin abrasions so animals rubbing against contaminated surfaces could pick up the disease but there is very little risk that people could contract caseous lymphadenitis from environmental contamination.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how infectious to people in close contact with the disease, particularly abattoir workers, is caseous lymphadenitis; and how many cases of human infection have been reported in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gillian Shephard: People in close contact with caseous lymphadenitis can become infected with the disease if the pus discharged from abscesses is able to enter the body through skin abrasions and care should be taken when handling diseased animals. However, such cases are extremely rare. We are not aware of any reported cases in the United Kingdom and only 13 in the rest of the world since records have been kept.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment she has made of the economic damage to the sheep industry which can be caused by caseous lymphadenitis.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The economic effect of any animal disease depends both on the nature of the disease and the extent of the outbreak. There is no evidence that caseous lymphadenitis is a serious problem or causes significant economic damage to the United Kingdom sheep industry. In Australia where the disease is endemic significant economic losses result from the loss in the animal's value from reduced production or rejection of infected meat at the abattoir.

Farm Statistics

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 20 April, *Official Report*, column *568*, if she will set out beef and ewe numbers for the minimum level of agricultural activity equivalents including 1993 standard man day—SMD—equivalents and European size unit—ESU—thresholds; and what are the reasons for the different definitions of what constitutes the minimum level of activity for a full-time commercial farm in the less-favoured area provided in her answer and printed in the farm business survey.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Farm size is not currently measured by standard man days; values for SMD equivalents have not been revised since 1976. The threshold for inclusion of farms in the farm business survey is currently eight ESU and in the less favoured areas this is equivalent to either 30 hill cows or between 200 and 250 hill ewes. It is estimated that farms below this size account for only about 2·8 per cent. of the total United Kingdom agricultural activity, as measured by SGM.

The reason for the change in the threshold used in the farm business survey from 275 SMD in 1964 to 250 SMD in 1979 reflected a reduction in the length of the working week. In 1979, when the method of measuring farm size based on SGMs was introduced in the United Kingdom, on average, across all types of crops and livestock, 250 SMD was approximately equivalent to four ESU based on the average of 1972 to 1974 SGM. SGMs used in farm classification in the United Kingdom have subsequently been updated to the average of 1978 to 1980 values and then to the average of 1987 to 1989 values to take account of changes in the gross margins of the various types of crops and livestock. The change in the ESU threshold from four to eight reflects changes in the aggregate value of the SGM of the United Kingdom agricultural sector resulting from the move from 1972-74 to 1978-80 SGM.

Pesticides

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list all types of consumer food products in which organophosphates have been found by Government scientists; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Surveillance carried out by the Government's working party on pesticides residues has detected residues of organophosphorus pesticides in samples of cereals, bread and other cereal products, fruit and vegetables. Details are published in the working party's annual reports.

Random sampling for organophosphorus compounds in cattle, sheep and pigs presented for slaughter is carried out under the national surveillance scheme for residues in meat. No traces of organophosphorus compounds have been found in samples collected from cattle and pigs. In 1992, however, six sheep kidney fat samples were found to contain detectable levels of diazinon but none of these exceeded the maximum residue limit.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the grades and qualifications of each member of her Department's committee which evaluates the use of organophosphate pesticides; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The members currently appointed to the advisory committee on pesticides are:

Chairman:

Professor Sir Colin Berry DSc, MD, PhD, FRCPath, FRCP, FFPM—Professor of Morbid Anatomy, Consultant in Histopathology and Director of the Histopathological Institute at the Royal London Hospital.

Members:

Dr. Andrée Carter BSc, MISoilSci, MIWEM—Principal Research Scientist and Laboratory Manager, Soil Survey and Land Research Centre.

Professor Nicola Cherry PhD, MD, FFOM—Director of the Centre for Occupational Health, University of Manchester.

Professor Michael Claridge MA, DPhil, FIBiol, FLS, FRES—Head of School and Professor of Pure Entomology, University of Wales.

Professor Anthony Dayan BSc, MD, FRCP, FRCPath, FFPM, FIBiol—Professor of Toxicology and Director of the DH Toxicology Laboratory, St. Bartholomew's Medical College.

Mr. John Leahy MA (Oxon), CChem, MRSC—General Manager of Severn Trent Laboratories.

Professor Donald Lee BSc, PhD, FIBiol, FRSA—Professor of Agricultural Zoology, University of Leeds.

Dr. Alex Proudfoot BSc (Hons), MB, ChB, FRCPE—Consultant Physician, Edinburgh Royal Infirmary and Director of the Scottish Poisons Information Bureau.

Dr. Eve Roman BSc, PhD—Epidemiologist, Imperial Cancer Research Fund, Cancer Epidemiology Unit, University of Oxford.

Professor Geoffrey Sagar CBE, BA, MA, DPhil (Oxon)—Professor of Agricultural Botany and Vice Principal of the University College of North Wales.

Mr. Roger Tayler BSc (Agric), Postgrad Dip Agric, NDA, CBiol, MIBiol—Senior Tutor in the Faculty of Agriculture and Food and Senior Lecturer in crop production, Department of Agriculture, University of Reading.

Professor Paul Webster BSc, PhD, FBIM, FRSA—Head of Department of Agricultural Economics, Wye College, University of London.

Folic Acid

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received asking that bread, cereals and flour be enriched with folic acid.

Mr. Soames: I have received no such representations.

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to ensure that bread, cereals and flour are enriched with folic acid.

Mr. Soames: The expert group that advised the Chief Medical Officer—in its report "Folic Acid and the Prevention of Neural Tube Defects"—recommended that only breads and breakfast cereals should be fortified and that a choice of unfortified products should remain available. There are therefore no plans for fortification of flour. Many breakfast cereals and a number of breads are already fortified with folic acid. My Department has written to the relevant trade organisations to encourage them to increase the range of products fortified with folic acid in line with recommendations of the expert advisory group. The response has been positive. About 50 to 60 per cent. of the breakfast cereals on the market are fortified with folic acid and a number of new fortified breads have appeared on the market.

Exercise Diver Mist

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many personnel from her Department were involved in Exercise Diver Mist; in what capacities they served; and what was the cost to her Department of this involvement.

Mr. Soames: Seven staff from this Department took part as exercise players in Exercise Diver Mist at a cost of £4,500. The purpose of involvement was to test the Department's emergency response plan.

Organophosphorus Sheep Dips

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will institute a moratorium on the use of organophosphorus sheep dips until the medical and scientific panel investigating reports of long-term health effects reaches its conclusions; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Independent scientific advice from the Veterinary Products Committee following its meeting in October is that there is no firm evidence to support the association of chronic health effects with exposure to organophosphorus sheep dips. The committee nevertheless recommended that knowledge of potential toxicity should be enhanced, which is why the medical and scientific panel has recently been set up. The committee concluded that in the mean time the marketing of the dips could continue, and the Government have accepted this advice.

Overgrazing

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what procedures are in place to monitor whether overgrazing has reduced following the withholding of hill livestock compensatory allowances as a direct result of the introduction of the hill livestock compensatory allowance overgrazing clause;

(2) what procedures are in place to monitor whether meetings between her Ministry's officials and producers to discuss ways of reducing overgrazing have led to reductions in overgrazing;

(3) what procedures are in place to reduce the environmental damage caused through overgrazing consequent on that damage continuing after hill livestock compensatory allowances are withheld as a result of the introduction of the hill livestock compensatory allowance overgrazing clause.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 19 April 1994]:* The overgrazing provisions of the hill livestock compensatory allowances scheme introduced in 1992 are intended to discourage farming practice which causes significant environmental damage. The Ministry has arrangements with ADAS to undertake biological monitoring of land which is considered to be overgrazed and to report on measures which should be taken to arrest further deterioration. The ADAS reports are discussed with the producers concerned with the aim of reaching agreement on improvements in management. To the extent that agreement is reached monitoring will continue to ensure that agreed action has been taken and that it is sufficient to prevent further environmental damage.

If agreement cannot be reached with producers and overgrazing continues we can exercise our powers to withhold allowances in their entirety. If farmers choose not to apply for hill livestock compensatory allowances we cannot continue to monitor the vegetation on their land since they are not subject to the provisions of the hill livestock compensatory allowances scheme.

We recognise that the application of overgrazing provisions to hill livestock compensatory allowances is limited in its effect as subsidies paid under sheep annual premium, suckler cow premium and beef special premium schemes currently have no such provision attached to them. However, the Council of Ministers has now made provision in the rules for these schemes which would enable us to attack similar conditions. It is our intention, following public consultation which is currently in progress, to introduce into all three schemes overgrazing provisions similar to those which currently apply to HLCAs. Once this is done, we will be able to take effective action against those producers who have been prepared to forgo payments under the HLCA scheme while continuing to overgraze their land. Producers who wish to benefit from the livestock subsidy schemes will therefore have to manage their land in ways which prevent further environmental damage.

The subject matter of these questions requires fuller treatment than is normally given in parliamentary answers. I shall therefore write to the hon. Member giving further details and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many producers have been approached by her Ministry's officials in each Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food region to discuss ways of reducing overgrazing in each year since the introduction of the hill livestock compensatory allowance overgrazing clause; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 19 April 1994]:* The information requested is as follows:

Region	*Number of producers approached*		
	1992	*1993*	*1994*
East Midlands	—	—	—
North East	—	25	18
Northern	—	89	—
North Mercia	—	—	40
South Mercia	—	—	—
South West	9	56	34
Wessex	—	16	4

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many hill livestock compensatory allowances she has withheld in 1992, 1993 and 1994 in each Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food region as a result of the introduction of the hill livestock compensatory allowance overgrazing clause; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 19 April 1994]:* The information required is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farmers have had hill livestock compensatory allowances withheld in 1992, 1993 and 1994 in each Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food region as a result of the introduction of the hill livestock compensatory allowance overgrazing clause.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 19 April 1994]:* The information requested is as follows:

Region	*Number of Farmers who have had allowances withheld*		
	1992	*1993*	*1994*
South West	5	6	4
All other regions	Nil	Nil	Nil

Performance Targets

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what targets have been set for the Central Science Laboratory in 1994-95.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have set the Central Science Laboratory the following strategic performance targets for 1994-95:

Financial:
- —100 per cent. cost recovery of full costs,
- —an overall efficiency gain of 2 per cent.,
- —a reduction of 2 per cent. in real terms of representative unit costs for services;

Service Delivery
- —at least 90 per cent. of work completed to time and within budget,
- —at least 95 per cent. of contracts delivered to the customer's satisfaction.

These are demanding targets which challenge the newly enlarged agency to build on its achievements to date. The Central Science Laboratory will continue to implement during 1994-95 arrangements for the independent assessment of the quality of the scientific work and publications. Details of performance in 1993-94 will be set out in the agency's annual report and accounts will be published during July 1994.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what targets have been set for the Central Veterinary Laboratory in 1994-95.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have set the Central Veterinary Laboratory the following strategic performance targets for 1994-95.

Financial performance
Full cost recovery for all central veterinary laboratory services.

Efficiency
An overall efficiency gain of 2·5 per cent.

Service delivery
85 per cent. of ROAME R and D milestones achieved.

Service quality
Achievement of a satisfactory report from a Visiting Group.
Achievement of laboratory accreditation for the Biological Products and Analytical Chemistry units.

Details of performance in 1993-94 will be set out in the agency's annual report and accounts to be published during July 1994.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what performance targets she has set for the Agricultural Development Advisory Service executive agency for 1994-95; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 25 February 1994 at columns *492-93* when I announced that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have decided that for 1994-95 ADAS will be asked to recover 63 per cent. of its costs for advisory services through charges to commercial customers; the balance will be met by my Department. I also announced ADAS's plans for restructuring its operations in order to achieve this new target, and reduce its cost base to make it competitive in all its markets.

The other financial, efficiency and service delivery targets for ADAS for 1994-95 will be:
- to achieve full cost recovery from all other work;
- to reduce the total cost per hour in contract delivery in real terms by 4 per cent.
- to maintain average debtor days at or better than the best achieved in any previous year;
- to meet 90 per cent. of R and D project milestones;
- to continue to achieve customer satisfaction as measured by customer surveys.

WALES

Departmental Publications

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales for how many regular publications he was responsible in 1993-94; what was their circulation; and how many were obtainable by subscription.

Mr. Redwood: Comprehensive information is not held centrally in the form requested. My Department's statistical directorate issued 25 regular statistical publications in 1993-94. All are available by subscription or standing order.

Sleeping Aids

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what restrictions are in place on advertising drugs available without prescription which are designed to aid sleep; what checks are carried out to ensure that addictive or potentially harmful drugs are not advertised for mass consumption; what health warnings should be given in such advertisements; in what ways regulations or guidelines on the advertisement of such drugs have been amended or relaxed within the past five years; what plans he has to introduce new legislation, statutory orders or guidelines to regulate the promotion of aids to sleep which are available without prescription; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary for Health on 27 April at column *203.* The legislation governing the advertisement of medicines is common to England and Wales.

Shops

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will announce a new grant aid scheme to encourage owners to change shops which are no longer in commercial use to residential use; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The house renovation grant arrangements already provide assistance to convert buildings, including disused shops, into living accommodation.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to issue planning

directives which encourage developers of large stores in Wales to use and adapt existing shops and other properties that lie empty in town and village shopping centres rather than build large new premises on the outskirts of town; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Planning policy guidance note 6, "Town Centres and Retail Developments", emphasises the role of existing town centres and village shops, and encourages local planning authorities to provide positive policies in development plans to encourage uses that will contribute to town centre vitality and viability.

Commercial Development

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will propose for Wales regulations or circulars similar to those announced for England, concerning restrictions on planning consents for commercial development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Guidance on a range of issues relating to industrial and commercial development and small firms is contained in the joint Department of the Environment and Welsh Office planning policy guidance note 4. Separate advice on the planning aspects of retail development is found in the joint DOE and Welsh Office PPG note 6. Planning policy guidance note 13, "Highway Considerations in Development Control", is under review and I will be issuing revised guidance in due course.

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of letters sent by his office to hon. Members are written in the Welsh language.

Mr. Redwood: This information is not available. However, all letters written by hon. Members in Welsh receive a reply in that language, unless requested otherwise.

Public Bodies

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much was paid in respect of their duties to board members appointed by him to non-departmental public bodies for the year 1993-94.

Mr. Redwood: Payments made to board members and executive NDPBs in 1993-94 amounted to £778,193.

Cremations

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest available annual figure for the number of people cremated.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The annual figures for the number of people cremated in Wales are collected by the Federation of British Cremation Authorities and were most recently published in volume 37 of the Federation's journal "Resurgam". This indicates that 20,212 cremations took place in Wales in 1993.

Mid-Glamorgan Ambulance Trust

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what amount of money is being spent by the Mid-Glamorgan ambulance NHS trust on its official launch; and how much the launch reception on 3 May at a south Wales hotel is expected to cost.

Mr. Redwood: This is a matter for the board of the NHS trust.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Ordination of Women

Mr. Roger Evans: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners how many people have received discretionary payments under section 5 of the Ordination of Women (Financial Provisions) Measure 1994.

Mr. Alison: There have to date been very few applicants under clause 5 of the Measure. Payments have been agreed in six cases.

Mr. Roger Evans: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners what guidelines have been issued on the procedures to be adopted in determining whether a payment is to be made under section 5 of the Ordination of Women (Financial Provisions) Measure 1994.

Mr. Alison: All applications under clause 5 of the Measure are considered individually by a sub-committee of the Pensions Board. The board has, however, established a set of working rules for the sub-committee to follow in such consideration, and these have been agreed with the Church Commissioners.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Departmental Publications

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security for how many regular publications he was responsible in 1993-94; what was their circulation; and how many were obtainable by subscription.

Mr. Scott: This Department, including its agencies, produces an extensive range of printed and other materials each year which could be interpreted as publications. In addition to those listed, a catalogue of leaflets, posters and audio cassettes available to the public—CAT 1—is available in the Library.

Social Security HQ produced in 1993-94:

Two newspapers—Benefit News for Jobhunters and New Start (Disability Working Allowance). Both had a circulation of about 60,000 and are available by free subscription.

The Social Security Annual Report is published annually and is available through HMSO to the public. Subscription/sold copies of the report stand at: subscription 238/sets 191.

Statistical publications—11 regular publications:

a. The Abstract of Statistics for Social Security Benefits and Contributions and the Indices of Retail Prices and Average Earnings. Annual publication; circulation 300.
b. Disability Working Allowance. Quarterly publication; circulation 120.
c. Family Credit. Quarterly publication; circulation 120.
d. Households Below Average Income Statistics. Annual publication; circulation 700.
e. Income Related Benefits—Estimates of Take-up. Annual publication; circulation 400.
f. Income Support Annual Statistical Enquiry. Annual publication; circulation 200.
g. Income Support Quarterly Statistical Enquiry. Quarterly publication; circulation 200.
h. Income Support Residential Care and Nursing Home Report. quarterly publication; circulation 150.
i. Personal Pensions. Annual publication; circulation 400.

j. Social Security Statistics. Annual publication; circulation 1,240.
k. Tax Benefit Model Tables. Annual publication; circulation 400.

Research publications are produced on a regular basis covering a variety of issues. Twelve publications have been produced in the period 1993-94. The circulation of these is entirely handled by HMSO. No research publications are available by subscription.

The latest social security research yearbook, which gives details of research published up to 1993 is available in the Library. The 1994 yearbook is not yet available.

Publications issued by the Department's agencies are listed separately:

Benefits Agency

(a) Benefits Agency Annual Report—This is published annually (July) and is available to all staff, local representative and Welfare groups, DSS senior management and Members of Parliament. The print run is approximately 10,000.
(b) Benefits Agency Business Plan (including Who we are and What we do)—This is an annual publication (April) with broadly the same distribution as the Annual Report. Copies are also distributed on request to various individuals and organisations. The print run this year was 15,000.
(c) Benefits Agency Customer Charter—This is a document monitored by Customer Service Branch with a print run of 250,000. It is available to anyone on request but whilst the content is reviewed and monitored regularly the publication is as and when required. The Agency has issued two versions so far.
(d) Annual National Customer Satisfaction Survey—This is commissioned annually by the Agency and the results are issued April/May. 3,000 copies are produced.
(e) Local Business Plans—Produced by each local business unit for distribution to its customers. They are produced annually and are in place in each district (159). Print runs and distribution size will vary according to individual unit/district.
(f) Local Charter Standard Statements—Produced by each local business unit for distribution to its customers. They are produced annually and are in place in each district. Print runs and distribution size will vary according to individual unit/district. Minimum print run is 2,000 per district.
(g) Staff Charter—This is a twice yearly publication issued to all staff. Print runs varies dependant on demand—usually 70-80,000.

All the above publications are available without charge to the recipients.

Child Support Agency

The Child Support Agency produced 56 publications in various printed or audio tape editions during 1993-94. None was a priced publication. They were available to the public and staff alike to outlets such as agency or social security offices, post offices, advice agencies or mailing houses.

Contribution Agency

(a) The Business Plan, Annual Report and Accounts.
(b) Code for Enforcement and Useful Contacts leaflet.
(c) Contributions Charter.

None of the above is a priced publication and all are freely available upon request from local social security offices.

Resettlement Agency

(a) Annual report 1992-93 published September 1993; circulation 1,000.
(b) Business Plan 1994-95 published March 1994; circulation 500.

Both publications were circulated to Parliament and grant recipients.

Information Technology Services Agency

(a) Annual Report and Accounts 1992-93—circulation through HMSO; quantity 210.
(b) Annual Business Plan 1993-94—this is not a period publication and is circulated internally. It is, however, available on request.

Neither publication is on subscription.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what plans there are to create uniform housing benefit forms for all local authorities, how much money such a move would save; and if he will make a statement; (2) what estimates he has as to how many different housing benefit forms are produced by local authorities; and what is the cost to each local authority of having to create their own forms.

Mr. Hague: When upon entitlement to income support a claim is made to housing benefit, a standard Benefits Agency claim form is used. There are no plans to create further uniform housing benefit claim forms and the Department has no estimate of the number of such forms used by local authorities. Information about the cost of local authority forms is not available.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the latest figures for people claiming housing benefit who are *(a)* receiving unemployment benefit, *(b)* receiving income support and *(c)* in a low income bracket; what estimates there are of how many more people may be entitled to these benefits but are not claiming them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: In May 1992, the total number of housing benefit recipients[1] who also satisfied the specified criteria were:

	Number
(a) Unemployment Benefit[2]	141,000
(b) Income Support[2]	2,590,000
(c) in a low income bracket[3]	1,629,000

Sources:

[1] The May 1992 annual 1 per cent Housing Benefit Management Information System and Income Support enquiries.
[2] The publication "Income Related Benefits Estimates of Take-up in 1990 and 1991" a copy of which is in the Library.

Notes:

1. The number of recipients has been rounded to the nearest thousand and is for benefit units. A benefit unit may be a single person or a couple.
2. Approximately 41,000 cases receive both unemployment benefit and income support.
3. Low income bracket has been defined as all recipients who are not in receipt of either income support or unemployment benefit.
4. Estimates for take-up of unemployment benefit or for housing benefit by income type are not available.

Estimates for the take up of income related benefits can be found in "Income Related benefits—Estimates of Take-up in 1990 and 1991" published on 25 March 1994. These figures show that income support is being claimed by between 77 and 90 per cent. of those eligible to claim.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the level of maintenance payments resulting from the operation of the CSA in 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the table. In 1992-93, the child support unit dealt only with cases where the parent with care PWC was in receipt of income support.

Table: Average level of maintenance by parent with care benefit status

£ per week	1992-93	1993-94[2]
PWC on Income Support	23·00[1]	40·00
PWC on Family Credit	—	40·00
PWC not on benefit	—	45·00

Notes:

[1] Derived from the May 1992 departmental annual statistical inquiry. The figure is rounded to the nearest pound.

[2] 1993-94 data are taken from a sample of cases assessed so far by the Child Support Agency and should be treated as provisional. Figures have been rounded to the nearest £5.

Incapacity

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received during the consultation process on the proposed medical assessment of incapacity about the importance of taking into account the degree of pain a person suffers; to what extent he considers pain to be a factor in a person's ability to work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I have received a number of such representations. Pain is an important factor in the assessment of incapacity for work. The new test of incapacity will take account of the effects of pain as well as other less obvious factors such as stress, fatigue and variability.

Family Credit

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families are in receipt of family credit; and what is the average payment.

Mr. Burt: The latest provisional information for November 1993 shows that 530,000 families receive family credit. The average award is £45 a week.

Note:

The figures come from a 5 per cent. sample of family credit awards.

War Pensions

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were in receipt of a war pension as of 20 April.

Mr. Hague: The information is not available in the form requested.

The available information is as follows: As of 31 March 1994, the latest date for which figures are available, the estimated number of war pensions in payment was 296,303. This includes 49,556 pensions in payment to war widows.

Unemployment Benefit

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what amount was spent on unemployment benefit claims in Scotland in the latest 12 months for which he has information.

Mr. Burt: Information on benefit expenditure in Scotland is not maintained separately. For the year 1992-93 it is estimated that the proportion of Great Britain expenditure on unemployment benefit in Scotland was £157 million.

Severe Hardship Unit, Glasgow

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what effect he expects the closure of the severe hardship unit in Glasgow to have on the success rates of 16 and 17-year-old applicants for severe hardship allowance;

(2) what benefits, other than of a financial nature, he expects to accrue to his Department as a result of the closure of the severe hardship unit in Glasgow.

Mr. Burt: The severe hardship unit in Glasgow has not been closed. From April 1994, specially trained officers in local district offices have delegated authority to make decisions on severe hardship. However, certain types of decisions will still be referred to the unit, in particular, any decision to withhold an award of income support.

It is not expected that these changes will influence the success rate. This partial devolution is intended to improve the service by accelerating the decision making process and rendering it more personal to the customer. Results will continue to be monitored.

Disabled People

Mr. Berry: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much the Government have spent in each of the last five years on advertising material to promote equal rights for disabled people.

Mr. Scott: Comprehensive information is not available centrally.

Claimants

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what plans he has to introduce a uniform system between benefit offices for treating claimants; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans he has to make initial access to claiming benefits easier, and to alter the present system of forms into an easier, more comprehensible format; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The administration of benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Peter Pike, dated 27 April 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions asking i) what measures are being taken to introduce a uniform system between benefit offices for treating claimants and ii) what plans there are to make initial access to claiming benefits easier and to alter the present system of forms into an easier, more comprehensible format.

The Secretary of State announced on 9 September last year a national programme to move towards a "One Stop" service for all the benefits processed by the Benefits Agency. This decision followed overwhelmingly positive responses from our customers and our staff to a discussion paper which we had published the previous year. The first stage of "One Stop" is a "One Place Programme". Some offices are already offering this service and by July of this year it will be in place in all BA local offices. The One Place Programme will mean that customers will be able to:

* obtain advice and information on all benefits from their local Benefits Agency office;

* lodge a claim for any BA benefit at a local office (regardless of where that benefit is processed), report a change of circumstances and receive reliable advice about the claim to benefit from that local office.

To ensure a consistent and acceptable service is available from all our outlets the Agency has distributed to all managers—and shared with customer organisations—a national Customer Service Definition, expanding on our Customer's Charter, which sets out the minimum level and scope of service to be delivered by all Districts by July 1994.

You asked specifically about our plans to alter the present system of forms into an easier, more comprehensible format. The BA has its own Document Design Unit which remains committed to the principles of Plain English, clear layout and colour to produce user friendly forms and claim packs. Over the past two years the unit has been reviewing the whole of District office typist's draft letters. This has been a massive undertaking resulting in the rewriting of nearly 1,200 letters and is now nearing completion.

It should be noted that the unit is among the leading prize winners in the Plain English Awards, having won the award six times between 1983 and 1991 and, in 1992, the International Council of Graphic Design Association awarded BA Document Design Unit its International Award for Excellence for "continued excellence over eight years", the first time it was awarded to an organisation in the UK and the first time to a Government Department anywhere in the world.

In order to test the effectiveness of our products all new claim packs and claim forms for major changes such as a new benefit are subjected to independent market research before the final versions are produced.

In addition, as part of the One Stop programme we are introducing an improved computer system—Integrated Benefit Information System (IBIS)—to support staff giving benefits information and personal benefit advice to customers. Part of the functionality planned for this new system in due course will be to capture the information supplied by the customer during an advisory interview and pre-print an acceptable claim form that the customer need only check and sign if they wish, on the basis of the advice they have received, to claim benefit. Pilots of this system in a number of offices have shown that this service is appreciated by many customers.

I hope you will find this reply helpful.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what levels of liaison are encouraged or practiced between Employment Service offices, DSS benefit offices and local authority housing benefit offices to ensure claimants are aware of all their claiming rights;

(2) what plans there are to encourage more inter-relations between the various points of contact to claimants of benefits, with particular reference to the Employment Service offices and local authority housing benefit departments.

Mr. Burt: The administration of benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Peter L. Pike, dated 27 April 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking about the current levels of liaison, and plans undertaken to improve liaison between DSS benefits offices, the Employment Service and housing benefit offices.

The Employment Service and local authorities have specific and distinct responsibilities for the administration of Unemployment Benefit and of Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit respectively. However, as part of our programme to improve customer service, we are working with the Employment Service and local authorities to achieve a more seamless interface between our distinct responsibilities. For example:

(1) In a number of districts we have out-station BA staff in Employment Service offices—and in two districts in local authority advice centres—to give customers advice on BA benefits.

(2) Claim forms for Income Support by the unemployed can now be lodged at job centres as well as at BA offices.

(3) We have improved our liaison arrangements with local authorities and each District now has a Service Level Agreement with the local authorities in its area.

(4) From June this year the main computer systems supporting Income Support and Unemployment Benefit will be linked allowing the faster and automatic transmission of information and payment instructions between the two agencies.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Credit Transfer

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the target savings in the year 1993-94 to be achieved by the extension of automatic credit transfer to *(a)* child benefit and *(b)* pensions; and whether those targets were achieved.

Mr. Burt: The administration of child benefit and pensions is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Jim Cousins, dated 27 April 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question about savings targeted and achieved from the extension of Automated Credit Transfer (ACT) to child benefit and pensions.

Individual benefits were not set targets for the savings to be achieved by the extension of ACT. However, targets were set in terms of the percentage increase in ACT take-up to be achieved by 1995-96 and these are *(a)* 3 per cent. for Child Benefit and *(b)* 2 per cent. for Pensions.

In the period from 31 March 1993 to 1 March 1994 the level of ACT take-up increased by *(a)* 1·3 per cent. for Child Benefit, from 22·4 per cent. to 23·7 per cent., and *(b)* by 2 per cent. for Pensions, from 27 per cent. to 29 per cent. I should add that the figures for Pensions exclude overseas cases and those where Retirement Pension has been combined with Income Support for payment purposes.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Bank Transfers

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many customers were receiving *(a)* child benefit and *(b)* pension payments by either bank transfer or order book payments in each of the last four years.

Mr. Burt: The administration of child benefit and pensions is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Jim Cousins, dated 27 April 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the number of customers in receipt of Child Benefit and Pension being paid by order book and automated credit transfer.

I have provided the figures that you require in the attached appendix.

I hope you find my reply helpful.

Child Benefit

Year	*Total*	*Order book*	*Act*
1990	6,642,950	5,345,675	1,297,275
1991	6,741,925	5,335,100	1,406,825
1992	6,801,475	5,296,050	1,505,425
1993	6,833,825	5,239,225	1,594,600

Retirement pension and widow's pension

Year	Total	Order book	Act	[1]Others
1990	8,744,048	6,445,754	1,981,646	316,648
1991	8,906,018	6,463,075	2,160,017	283,726
1992	9,191,326	6,433,787	2,392,292	365,247
1993	9,882,576	6,386,962	2,670,937	824,917

[1] Others include those cases where payments are made by hospital schedule, 13 weekly payments, and annual payments by payable order.

Social Security Benefits, Edinburgh

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of state for Social Security what is the number of recipients of *(a)* income support, *(b)* invalidity benefit and *(c)* retirement pension in the area covering Edinburgh postcodes EH4 and EH5.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Malcolm Chisholm, dated 27 April 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent parliamentary Question asking for details of the number of recipients of Income Support, Invalidity Benefit and Retirement Pension in the area covering Edinburgh Postcodes EH4 and EH5.

Figures are not available which relate soley to the specific post codes requested. However, the Edinburgh postcodes EH4 and EH5 come within the area of the Benefits Agency's Lothian Central District, which comprises the Edinburgh City and Edinburgh North offices and also covers postcodes EH1-EH3, EH6-EH8 and EH10. The Lothian Central District live loads for the benefits referred to are:

Income Support	22,687	at 28 February 1994*
Invalidity Benefit	5,551	at 31 March 1994**
Retirement Pension	30,958	at 28 February 1994*

* Obtained from a routine quarterly count of computer records

** Obtained from a routine clerical count of live records. This figure will include a small number of customers who, although entitled to Invalidity Benefit, are not receiving it because of entitlement to an overlapping benefit payable at a higher weekly rate.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Invalidity Benefit

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to the answer given to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) on 3 March, *Official Report,* column *821,* what advice is given to women who are awaiting the outcome of the Graham case at the European Court of Justice, in relation to the lifting of the suspension of payment of invalidity benefit; what guidelines have been issued to local offices to enable officials to deal with such applications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's discretion to take account of extreme hardship in deciding whether to impose or lift suspension of benefit is exercised on his behalf by Benefits Agency staff. Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, will write to the hon. Member with further information.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Dr. Norman Godman, dated 27 April 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about women in receipt of Invalidity Benefit (IVB), who at age 60 have had part of their IVB suspended.

You will be aware from the reply of 3 March to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Volume 238, column 821, that the Benefits Agency (BA) routinely notifies women who are entitled to an increase of IVB as a result of the Social Security Commissioner's (SSC) decision in the Graham case. It is explained that the payment of the increase is suspended by the Secretary of State. Customers are also advised that they will be paid in full if the Commissioner's decision against which the Secretary of State is appealing is upheld; and that if they have difficulty managing they should contact their local BA office.

All local offices are issued with guidelines in relation to the lifting of the suspension of payment of IVB. The Secretary of State has the discretion not to suspend if it would be inappropriate to do so, for example if it would cause exceptional hardship in an individual case.

There are no set criteria for lifting suspensions. Each case is considered in relation to the personal circumstances of the customer. However, the Agency, conscious of the requirement to treat all customers fairly, issued guidelines on the question of hardship to all local offices. They stress that cases have to be looked at individually and that, while it is not possible to state in hard and fast terms what constitutes exceptional hardship, a number of factors need to be borne in mind by staff considering hardship applications.

These include the fact that hardship will arise only in exceptional circumstances; that prior to the Commissioner's decision, IVB would have been reduced to the rate of the Retirement Pension that would otherwise have been payable; that Income Support and Social Fund are available to meet financial hardship; and that the onus is on the customer to prove that hardship exists rather than for the Agency to disprove hardship.

The guidance also gives two examples of circumstances in which exceptional hardship might be considered. These are:

1. where it is already known or suspected that a customer has a terminal illness and is likely to die before the outcome of the appeal is known; and
2. where the customer has been led to believe that benefit will continue at the higher rate and has entered into a financial commitment on that basis.

It is not inevitable that exceptional hardship would be found to exist in these sort of situations, nor are they the only situations in which exceptional hardship would be considered. They are provided to give examples of what "exceptional hardship" might mean and indicate that such cases can be expected to arise only rarely.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

EMPLOYMENT

Departmental Publications

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for how many regular publications he was responsible in 1993-94; what was their circulation; and how many were obtainable by subscription.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department published 10 regular publications in the last financial year. All are available through subscription to subscribers who have indicated they wish to be on databases held by the Department. Average circulation details are shown in the following table:

Publication	Circulation	Frequency
Employment Gazette	7,000	monthly
Employment News	56,000	monthly
Tempo	48,000	monthly
Labour Force Survey	1,000	quarterly
Insight	70,000	3 × per year
Labour Market Quarterly Review	25,000	quarterly

Publication	Circulation	Frequency
Update	25,000	8 × per year
Labour Market Skill Trends	25,000	8 × per year
Competence and Assessment	6,739	quarterly
Career Development Loans—newsletter	10,000	quarterly

Disabled People

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of people with disabilities have jobs.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The labour force survey asks people of working age if they currently have a health problem or disability which limits the kind of paid work they can do. Estimates based on answers to this question will include people with short-term health problems and disabilities as well as those registered as disabled.

The latest LFS estimates for summer 1993 show that of all such people of working age in Great Britain 34 per cent. were in employment, 10 per cent. were ILO unemployed and 56 per cent. where economically inactive.

Mr. Berry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the proportion of employers complying with the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Roger Berry, dated 28 April 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about his estimate of the proportion of employers complying with the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944.

As at 1 June 1993, the latest date for which information is available, there were 5,525 (18·9%) employers for whom my Placing, Assessment and Counselling Teams (PACTs) had records and who met or exceeded the 3% Quota.

I hope this is helpful.

Mr. Berry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many referrals for employment rehabilitation were made by the Employment Service in the years 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Roger Berry, dated 28 April 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question, about how many referrals for employment rehabilitation were made by the Employment Service in the years 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94.

The number of people who were referred to employment rehabilitation by the Employment Service and who started programmes in the years from 1991-92 to 1993-94 were:

	Number
1991-92	12,149
1992-93	7,569
1993-94	9,532

The figures for 1992-93 have been revised. The figures for 1992-93 published in the departmental Report contained a clerical error. A figure of 8,036 rehabilitation starts for 1992-93 was quoted in the department Report. This was a forecast outturn which appeared in previous documents, and should not have been given as the actual outturn. The actual outturn was 7,569.

I hope this is helpful.

Mr. Berry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many complaints under section 9(5) of the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1994, relating to the dismissal of a registered disabled person without reasonable cause, have been *(a)* investigated by the Employment Service, *(b)* referred to a district advisory committee and *(c)* prosecuted by the Secretary of State in each year since 1964.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility of the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Roger Berry, dated 28 April 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Question about how many complaints under section 9(5) of the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 have been investigated by the Employment Service; how many have been referred to a district advisory committee; and how many employers have been prosecuted by the Secretary of State in each year since 1964.

It may be helpful if I explain that the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 does not provide a statutory complaints procedure. However, registered disabled people who lose their jobs, and who think their employers may have infringed the 1944 Act in dismissing them, may complain to their local Disability Employment Adviser. Complaints which cannot be resolved satisfactorily by negotiation are thoroughly investigated and all the relevant factors are taken into account before a decision is taken.

Employers cannot be prosecuted without the authority of the Secretary of State for Employment. Criminal proceedings cannot be commenced against an employer under the unreasonable discharge provisions of the Act unless the matter has first been referred to a local district advisory committee these bodies are (now known as Committees for the Employment of People with Disabilities—CEPDs) for a report.

I regret that we do not have information on the number of complaints investigated. This information is not held centrally. However, the average annual number was probably very small.

Similarly, information is not readily available on the number of such cases referred to CEPDs for a report for the full period since 1964. However, one case was referred to a CEPD in 1983, another in 1991, two in 1992 and one in 1993.

Three employers have been prosecuted since 1964, for alleged offences against the unreasonable discharge provisions of the Act; there was one prosecution in 1964, one in 1973 and one in 1974.

I hope this is helpful.

Multinational Companies

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 19 April, *Official Report*, column *491*, what is the policy of the European Commission on the applicability to Britain of the draft legislation on works councils for multinationals; and what plans he has to resolve disagreements.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The European Commission accepts that the proposed directive on European works councils should not apply to any companies or employees in the United Kingdom.

Women's Unwaged Work

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what evaluation he has made of the report issued by the European Parliament on the assessment of women's unwaged work; what steps the Government intend to take to implement the recommendations in the report that women's unwaged work should be included in the figures for gross national product; and what plans he has to provide social security and pension rights for unwaged women at home.

Miss Widdecombe: The Government recognise the important contribution women make to society both at home and in the workplace. The compilation of gross domestic product figures are the responsibility of the Central Statistical Office. The CSO follows the internationally agreed system of national accounts which recommends that domestic work is not included. The reasons for this are explained in paragraphs 6.19 and 6.22 of the new SNA, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Concerning social security rights, a married woman can qualify for a retirement pension based on her husband's insurance record. In addition, women with caring responsibilities at home may qualify for home responsibilities protection. Responsibility for these two issues lies with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Code of Practice on Government Information

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether the new code of practice on Government information applies to training and enterprise councils.

Miss Widdecombe: Yes, the code extends to functions carried out on behalf of Departments by contractors and, as such, training and enterprise councils are regarded as being within scope.

Employment Service, West Midlands

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) of 19 April, *Official Report*, column 727, how many of the people of the west midlands placed in work by the Employment Service in the last 12 months were in *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time (i) temporary and (ii) permanent jobs; and what information he has on the proportion of these jobs which paid less than a half of the current average hourly rate.

Miss Widdecombe: Approximately 70 per cent. of those placed into employment by the Employment Service in the west midlands in the last 12 months were placed into full-time jobs, the rest in part-time jobs. It is estimated that 82 per cent. of vacancies filled in the last 12 months were in permanent jobs, the rest were temporary jobs of up to six months in duration. No information is available on the rates of pay which these jobs attracted.

Equal Pay Cases

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many cases have been taken to the European Court under article 119 of the EEC treaty on equal pay since its acceptance; if he will make a statement on the trends; and what proposals Her Majesty's Government will bring forward based upon those trends.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We are aware of 46 cases which have been taken to the European Court of Justice under article 119 of the EEC treaty since it came into effect in 1957.

The decisions reflect developing jurisprudence in the field of equal pay between men and women for equal work. They do not reveal any discernible trend.

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employees of the Employment Department are employed on six month contracts; and, of these, how many have had their contracts renewed *(a)* once, *(b)* twice, *(c)* three times and *(d)* more than three times.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 26 April 1994]:* Only one, and his contract has been renewed more than three times.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list for each quarter since spring 1992 the number of people in Great Britain surveyed by the labour force survey who, although they are without a job, have looked for a job within the four weeks prior to their labour force survey interview or are waiting to start a job they had already obtained, were not available to start a job within the two weeks following their labour force survey interview, and the number of people on the International Labour Organisation measure, but who said they would like a job.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 26 April 1994]:* Both of the categories asked for in the question are defined as economically inactive according to international ILO guidelines. Estimates from the labour force survey for each quarter since spring 1992 of the numbers in each group are given in the table.

As shown by the analyses of these groups routinely published in the LFS helpline section of the *Employment Gazette*, the majority of people who say they want work but are not actively seeking it are students, looking after a family or home, or long-term sick or disabled.

Great Britain

People who say they would like work but are not actively seeking it and/or are not available to start

Thousands

Quarter	*Total*	*Of which: seeking work, but not available to start*[1]
Spring 1992	2,221	313
Summer 1992	2,191	277
Autumn 1992	2,128	231
Winter 1992-3	2,177	232
Spring 1993	2,195	310
Summer 1993	2,248	245
Autumn 1993	2,226	190

Source: Labour Force Survey
Not seasonally adjusted

[1] Numbers without a paid job who had either looked for work in the past four weeks or were waiting to start a job they had already obtained, but were not available to start within the next two weeks.

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a breakdown of the latest data on the actual and usual hours worked by *(a)* part-time employees, *(b)* self-employed part-time workers and *(c)* all part-timers who work (i) less than eight hours per week, (ii) between eight and 16 hours per week and (iii) between 16 and 24 hours per week.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 26 April 1994]:* Estimates from the autumn 1993 labour force survey for Great Britain of the number of people whose main job was part time are as shown in the table. Actual hours returned in the survey are shorter than usual hours because they take into account periods of absence from work in the survey reference week arising from, for example, holidays or sickness.

Total actual hours of people working part time—Great Britain
Autumn 1993 — *Thousands*

Status	*0 to 7 hours*	*8 to 15 hours*	*16 to 23 hours*
Employees	1,204	1,425	1,493
Self-employed	209	154	108
Employees and self-employed	1,413	1,579	1,601

Total usual hours of people working part time—Great Britain
Autumn 1993 — *Thousands*

Status	*0 to 7 hours*	*8 to 15 hours*	*16 to 23 hours*
Employees	629	1,519	1,762
Self-employed	122	175	141
Employees and self-employed	751	1,695	1,903

Source: Labour Force Survey.

Redundancies

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many claims were processed by the Redundancy Payments Service in 1992-93 and 1993-94; what were the costs of meeting payments shortfalls under the Employment Protection Act 1978 when enterprises were insolvent; and what sums were recovered in 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Miss Widdecombe: The number of claims processed by the Redundancy Payments Service in 1992-93 was 301,913 and in 1993-94, 242,332.

The Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 provides for various payments out of the national insurance fund when an employer is unable to make them by reason of insolvency. Payments made and sums recovered in 1992-93 and 1993-94 were as follows:

£ million

	1992-93	*1993-94*
Payments		
To employers in respect of arrears of pay, holiday pay, compensation for pay in lieu of notice and certain other payments	154·9	129·7
To occupational pension schemes in respect of unpaid contributions	4·7	7·2
TOTAL PAYMENTS	159·6	136·9
Debt recovery		
Recovery of debts in insolvency	18·7	16·8

Note: Because of the delay between the making of payments and the eventual settlement fo claims in the insolvency, the sums recovered do not correspond directly to the year in which payments were made. The figures for payments and recoveries for 1993-94 are, at this stage, provisional.

Pregnant Workers

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish his estimate of the additional number of women in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Scotland, *(d)* Northern Ireland and *(e)* the United Kingdom, who would be entitled to have their posts kept open for them while pregnant in the event of implementation of the ruling of the Law Lords in March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government are carefully considering the House of Lords judgment to ascertain its full implications and will make an announcement as soon as possible.

Jobcentres (South Yorkshire Villages)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what jobcentre catchment areas cover the south Yorkshire villages of Adwick-on-Dearne, Barnburgh, Brodsworth, Clayton-with-Frickley, Hampole, Hickleton, High Melton, Hooton Pagnell and Marr.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 28 April 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question asking which Jobcentre catchment areas cover a number of South Yorkshire villages.

It may be helpful if I explain that Jobcentre boundaries are designed to reflect the geographical areas from which Jobcentres can realistically expect to attract clients in terms of employers and job seekers, therefore boundaries are not static.

I should also point out that there is some flexibility in the choice of Employment Service office at which clients claim unemployment related benefits. Therefore job seekers living in these villages may not necessarily attend the office given below.

The answers requested are provided in the table below.

Villages	*Covered by Jobcentre at*
Adwick-on-Dearne	Mexborough
Barnburgh	Goldthorpe
Brodsworth	Doncaster[1]
Clayton-with-Frickley	South Kirby
Hampole	Doncaster[1]
Hickleton	Goldthorpe
High Melton	Goldthorpe
Hooton Pagnell	South Kirby
Marr	Doncaster[1]

[1]There are five offices in Doncaster.

I hope this is helpful.

Construction Industry

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on fatal injury rates for the construction sector.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The estimated fatal injury rate for employees for 1992-93 is the lowest on record, at 7·5

per 100,000. The comparable rate for self-employed workers is 3·7 per 100,000, which is significantly lower than for most of the 1980s. The combined rate for major injuries has also fallen by 20 per cent. over the last five years. I am greatly encouraged by these reductions, which have undoubtedly been helped by the efforts of committed people in the industry, the Health and Safety Commission and the Health and Safety Executive.

However, there is no room for complacency. Good planning and management is the key to better health and safety performance, and we must continue to seek ways of getting that message adopted right across the industry. For that reason, the HSE will continue to attach a high priority to inspection in the construction sector, through checks on the quality of site management, and through head office visits and risk-targeted campaigns. In addition HSE inspectors will not hesitate to use their considerable enforcement powers to require improvements, or take prosecutions, where necessary.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Slaughterhouses

13. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what abattoirs exist in Northern Ireland for the purpose of slaughtering *(a)* equines and *(b)* other animals; how many such animals were slaughtered in the past year; what was the total value of the animals in categories *(a)* and *(b)* which were slaughtered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: There are no abattoirs in Northern Ireland approved for the slaughter of equines. In 1993, 20 abattoirs were approved for the slaughter of other animals and those slaughtered some 453,000 cattle, 981,000 pigs and 1 million sheep worth in total some £403 million. I have arranged for additional information to be placed in the Library.

Cross-border Security

14. **Mr. Robathan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what further progress has been made regarding cross-border security co-operation with the Irish Republic.

Sir John Wheeler: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland).

Public Services

15. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what expansion is proposed in the essential public services of Northern Ireland during the current financial year.

Sir John Wheeler: The departmental report Command Paper 2516, published on 11 March, summarised plans for the provision of public services which involve departmental expenditure.

Political Talks

16. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a further statement about the progress of the inter-party talks.

20. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met the leaders of Northern Ireland's political parties; and if he will make a statement on progress in the talks.

Mr. Ancram: I am continuing bilateral discussions with three of the four Northern Ireland parties on the same basis as previously and the two Governments continue to work intensively on a framework to carry the process forward.

25. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent discussions he has had with political leaders from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland about the peace process.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: My hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) and I meet political leaders from Northern Ireland regularly to discuss a range of matters including political development and the prospects for a permanent end to violence.

I met the Irish Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Spring, at a meeting of the intergovernmental conference in Belfast this Monday.

26. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on meetings which have been held with the political parties in Northern Ireland and the Irish Government regarding a constitutional settlement for Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) earlier today.

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on progress towards securing a resumption of the inter-party talks on the future of Northern Ireland; and what discussions he has had with the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: My hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) is continuing his bilateral discussions with, at present, three of the four Northern Ireland parties. The two Governments continue to work extensively on a framework to carry the process forward.

Security Situation

17. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what his assessment is of the current security situation in the Province.

22. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on security matters as they relate to Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I refer my hon. Friend and the hon. Member to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) earlier today.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

18. **Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the results achieved by the Northern Ireland criminal injuries compensation scheme with particular reference to the effects on the victim.

Sir John Wheeler: The chief executive of the Compensation Agency advises that the 1994 provisional

outturn for criminal injuries was 11,289 claims cleared and compensation totalling £29·6 million paid. No amount can fully compensate for the effect of criminal injuries.

Joint Declaration

19. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has for advancing the Downing street declaration; and what he proposes for the next stage.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) earlier today.

Social Security

21. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on eligibility for social security benefits in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: Social security benefits are available in Northern Ireland on the same basis as they are in Great Britain.

Inward Investment

23. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what initiatives he is making to promote investment by United States companies in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tim Smith: The year 1993-94 has been an encouraging year in terms of inward investment and I believe that new Industrial Development Board initiatives in San José and Atlanta will help to maintain the momentum and reinforce success.

27. **Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on prospects for inward investment to Northern Ireland during the period 1994 to 1995.

Mr. Tim Smith: Recent results suggest the Industrial Development Board is experiencing increasing success and it is my hope that we will see a continuation of this trend.

Trade With the Irish Republic

24. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he is taking to encourage trade between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: The Industrial Development Board has organised a series of export seminars and clinics to advise Northern Ireland companies about export opportunities in the Republic of Ireland. In addition, since 1992 the board and the Irish Trade Board have co-operated in a wide range of trade and export activities.

Mr. Gerry Adams

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has received the document agreed between the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) and Mr. Gerry Adams; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: No.

Housing

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to meet future housing needs in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tim Smith: I commend the Housing Executive, housing associations and the private sector for the excellent contributions they have made, and continue to make, to improving housing in Northern Ireland and meeting the Government's objectives of increasing owner-occupation, improving housing conditions and meeting urgent housing need. Future housing policies and programmes must build on the progress made to date. I have, therefore, asked the Department of the Environment to initiate a housing review with the following terms of reference:

"to review policies and programmes aimed at meeting housing need in Northern Ireland".

The Department will shortly be inviting a wide range of interests to submit comments and proposals to this review and I intend to publish a consultation paper on the outcome. I want to make it quite clear that this review is of policies and programmes and is predicated on the continued existence of the Housing Executive as the single regional housing authority, together with an expanding voluntary housing sector and a growing private sector.

Nursing and Midwifery Staff

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the whole-time equivalent numbers of *(a)* agency and *(b)* bank nursing and midwifery staff employed in the NHS for each year since 1987.

Mr. Ancram: There are no agency nurses employed in the health and personal social services in Northern Ireland. Information on the number of bank nurses, whole-time equivalent, is only available from 1990 and is as follows:

	Number
1990	40·38
1991	47·40
1992	42·46
1993	58·74

There are no bank midwifery staff.

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many qualified NHS nurses and midwives, unqualified NHS nursing staff and nursing learners there were in each year since 1993; and what percentage each group was of the total NHS and midwifery staff in each year.

Mr. Ancram: The information, at December 1993, is as follows:

	Whole time equivalent	*Percentage of all nurses*	*Percentage of total NHS staff*
Trained nursing	12,230·88	77·19	28·58
Student nursing	230·10	1·45	0·54
Other nursing	3,384·69	21·36	7·91

Note: Figures for Student Nursing represent traditional students and exclude 1694 Project 2000 students.

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the numbers of whole-time

equivalent NHS nursing and midwifery staff employed on each grade and pay point of the clinical grades, educational grades and senior nursing and midwifery pay spine in each year since 1990.

Mr. Ancram: Details of the number of whole-time equivalent nursing and midwifery staff are as follows:

	1991	1992	1993	1994
Senior Nursing Staff	74·11	65·00	66·00	56·00
Scale A	2,737·19	2,899·24	2,807·74	285·37
Scale B	226·68	342·47	430·92	522·21
Scale C	1,124·27	995·37	907·95	798·52
Scale D	3,448·58	3,798·34	3,818·30	4,097·26
Scale E	4,884·96	4,733·83	4,536·20	4,374·00
Scale F	430·92	419·23	438·31	422·27
Scale G	2,221·14	2,142·14	2,034·61	1,905·79
Scale H	183·40	223·40	241·59	238·59
Scale I	184·64	165·67	155·27	136·27
Educational Grades	284·73	288·80	282·09	274·87

Note: Information for 1990 and details of nurses on pay points is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Nursing Education

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the numbers of entrants to initial pre-registration nursing education by course of study and by the academic qualifications possessed by entrants in each year since 1989.

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

Part of register	Number of students who commenced training 1988-89	1989-90
Part 1 (general nursing)	708	671
Part 3 (medical health nursing)	186	176
Part 5 (mental handicap nursing)	58	54
Part 8 (children's nursing)	10	18
Part 1-degree	20	22
Part 1-part 8	56	46
Total	1,038	987

Part of register	Number of students who commenced training 1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Part 1 (General Nursing)	409	180	150
Part 1/Degree	27	32	—
Part 3 (Mental Health Nursing)	94	61	27
Part 5 (Mental Handicap Nursing)	12	34	22
Part 8 (Children's Nursing)	23	12	—
Part 12 (Adult Nursing—P2000)	217	429	461
Part 13 (Mental Health Nursing: P2000)	36	94	79
Part 14 (Mental Handicap Nursing: P2000)	18	43	34
Part 15 (Children's Nursing: P2000)	16	30	49
Part 12/Degree	—	—	32
Total	852	915	854

It is not possible without undertaking a detailed manual exercise to provide details of the academic qualifications possessed by entrants in each year. However, the minimum entry requirements are five GCSE or GCE O-level grades or equivalent.

Health Service Staff

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of the numbers of health service directly employed staff by main staff group for each year since 1987; and what were the changes between each year and the next over the whole period in numbers and percentages.

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

HPSS workforce by staff group (whole time equivalents)

Main staff groups	Numbers
1987	
Medical	2,007·66
Trained Nursing	12,293·16
Student Nursing	2,924·00
Other Nursing	2,747·84
Paramedical	2,365·76
Administration and Clerical	5,787·98
Domestic and Allied	8,927·95
Tradesmen	951·61
Other Grades	611·73
Social Services	4,380·29
Dental	361·24
Pharmacy	235·09
Ambulance	579·25
Home Helps	2,965·81
Total	47,139·37

Main staff groups	1988	1988 compared with 1987 Numbers	Per cent.
Medical	2,036·91	+20·25	+1·46
Trained nursing	12,581·10	+287·94	+2·34
Student nursing	2,841·90	−82·10	−2·81
Other nursing	2,776·61	+28·77	+1·05
Paramedical	2,440·54	+74·78	+3·16
Administration and clerical	5,944·29	+156·31	+2·70
Domestic and Allied	8,510·79	−417·16	+4·67
Tradesmen	927·00	−24·61	−2·59
Other Grades	596·97	−14·76	−2·41
Social Services	4,463·17	+82·88	+1·89
Dental	355·71	−5·53	−1·53
Pharmacy	237·60	+2·51	+1·07
Ambulance	575·75	−3·50	−0·60
Home Helps	2,758·82	−206·99	−6·98
Total	47,047·16	−92·21	−0·20

Main staff groups	1989 compared with 1988 1989	Numbers	Per cent.
Medical	2,073·52	+36·51	+1·80
Trained nursing	12,507·94	−73·16	−0·58
Student nursing	2,733·03	−108·87	−3·83
Other nursing	2,855·15	+78·54	+2·83
Paramedical	2,484·12	+43·58	+1·79
Administration and clerical	6,257·90	+313·61	+5·28
Domestic and allied	7,905·80	−604·99	−7·11
Tradesmen	913·00	−14·00	−1·51
Other grades	556·78	−40·19	−6·73
Social services	4,552·56	+89·39	+2·00
Dental	344·80	−10·91	−3·07
Pharmacy	247·70	+10·10	−4·25
Ambulance	567·84	−7·91	−1·37
Home helps	2,703·14	−55·68	−2·02
Total	46,703·28	−343·88	−0·73

Main Staff Groups	1990 compared with 1989 1990	Numbers	Per cent.
Medical	1,977·57	95·95	−4·63
Trained Nursing	12,471·98	−35·96	−0·29
Student Nursing	[1]1,678·24	−154·79	−5·66
Other Nursing	2,946·71	+91·56	+3·21
Paramedical	2,564·08	+69·96	+2·82
Administration and Clerical	6,748·95	+491·05	+7·85
Domestic and Allied	7,127·49	−778·31	−9·84
Tradesmen	878·00	−35·00	−3·83
Other Grades	526·78	−30·00	−5·39
Social Services	4,624·16	+71·60	+1·57
Dental	339·84	−4·96	−1·44
Pharmacy	250·39	+2·96	+1·09
Ambulance	588·43	+20·59	+3·63
Home Helps	2,373·48	−329·66	−12·20
Total	45,986·10	−717·18	−1·51

Main Staff Groups	1991 compared with 1990 1991	Numbers	Per cent.
Medical	2,027·22	+49·65	+2·51
Trained Nursing	12,506·44	+34·46	+0·28
Student Nursing	[2]1,786·30	−811·94	−31·49
Other Nursing	3,253·93	+307·22	+10·43
Paramedical	2,679·21	+125·13	+4·9
Administration and Clerical	7,379·17	+630·22	+9·34
Domestic and Allied	6,215·58	−911·91	−12·79
Tradesmen	839·00	−39·00	−4·44
Other Grades	476·85	−49·93	−9·48
Social Services	4,628·71	+4·55	+0·10
Dental	325·50	−14·34	−4·22
Pharmacy	255·11	+4·72	+1·89
Ambulance	579·75	−8·68	−1·48
Home Helps	2,268·62	−104·86	−4·42
Total	45,201·40	−784·70	−1·71

Main staff groups	1992 compared with 1991 1992	Numbers	Per cent.
Medical	1,943·82	−8·34	−4·11
Trained nursing	12,343·90	−162·54	−1·30
Student nursing	[3]942·40	−823·9	46·65
Other nursing	3,267·75	+13·82	+0·43
Paramedical	2,746·00	+66·79	+2·49
Administrative and Clerical	7,632·45	+253·28	+3·43
Domestic and allied	5,678·67	−536·91	−8·64
Tradesmen	801·00	−38·00	−4·53
Other grades	480·15	+3·30	+0·69
Social services	4,596·99	−31·72	−0·69
Dental	321·02	−4·48	−1·38
Pharmacy	253·88	−1·23	−0·48
Ambulance	673·24	+93·39	+16·13
Home helps	2,085·85	−182·77	−8·06
Total	43,767·12	−1,434·28	−3·17

Main staff groups	1993 compared with 1992 1993	Numbers	Per cent.
Medical	1,968·26	+24·44	+1·26
Trained nursing	12,230·88	−113·02	−0·92
Student nursing	[4]230·10	−712·30	−75·58
Other nursing	3,384·69	+116·94	+3·58
Paramedical	2,785·82	+39·82	+1·45
Administrative and Clerical	7,804·27	+171·82	+2·25
Domestic and allied	5,407·78	−270·89	−4·77
Tradesmen	781·00	−20·00	−2·50
Other grades	447·62	−32·53	−6·77
Social services	4,543·92	−53·07	−1·15
Dental	314·96	−6·06	−1·89
Pharmacy	258·29	+4·41	+1·74
Ambulance	669·92	+3·32	−0·49
Home helps	1,974·95	−110·90	−5·32
Total	42,802·46	−964·66	−2·20

Main Staff Groups	1993 Compared with 1987 Numbers	Per cent.
Medical	−39·40	−1·96
Trained Nursing	−62·28	−0·51
Student Nursing	−2,693·90	−92·13
Other Nursing	+636·85	+23·18
Paramedical	+420·06	+17·76
Admin and Clerical	+2,016·29	+34·84
Domestic and Allied	−3,520·17	−39·43
Tradesmen	−170·61	−17·93
Other Grades	−164·11	−26·83
Social Services	+163·63	+3·74
Dental	−46·28	−12·81
Pharmacy	+23·20	+9·87
Ambulance	+90·67	+15·65
Home Helps	−990·86	−33·41
Total	−4,336·91	−9·20

[1] Excludes 188 Project 2,000 Student Nurses.
[2] Excludes 861 Project 2,000 Student Nurses.
[3] Excludes 1,441 Project 2,000 Student Nurses.
[4] Excludes 1,694 Project 2,000 Student Nurses.

Departmental Publications

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for how many regular publications he was responsible in 1993-94; what was their circulation; and how many were obtainable by subscription.

Sir John Wheeler: The Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Departments produced 192 regular publications during the financial year 1993-94. Circulation included a wide range of public and private sector bodies, groups representing clients interests, interested parties, academics, various officials and, where appropriate, Northern Ireland Members of Parliament, Northern Ireland and party spokesmen and the Library of the House. Some 107 of those regular publications were available by subscription or for purchase through HMSO.

Strangford Lough Marine Nature Reserve

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans have been made to ensure that the livelihoods of fishermen will be protected as a result of the proposed designation of the Strangford Lough marine nature reserve; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tim Smith: It is not anticipated that the creation of the proposed marine nature reserve for Strangford Lough will adversely affect the livelihoods of local fishermen; nonetheless, following objections received from organisations representing the fishermen, the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland will continue its dialogue with the representatives concerned with a view to resolving any problems.

Ambulance Service

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the standard response times of the ambulance service in the Southern and Eastern health board areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The standard response times for an emergency ambulance call in Eastern ambulance HSS trust area is 18 minutes, that is, from the receipt of the call to the arrival of a vehicle at the site of the patient. Over the nine months period 1 April to 31 December 1993, 93 per cent. of emergency ambulance calls were responded to within this target.

The standard response times for an emergency ambulance call in Southern health and social services board area is 21 minutes, that is, from the receipt of the call to the arrival of a vehicle at the site of the patient. Over the nine months period 1 April to 31 December 1993, 95 per cent. of emergency ambulance calls were responded to within this target.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the current response times of the ambulance service in the Mournes area of South Down covered by the Southern health and social services board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: Information on response times is not available for the Mournes area of South Down as this information is collected only on an area board basis.

Vehicle Crime

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what estimate he has made of the reduction in *(a)* non-terrorist related vehicle crime and *(b)* all vehicle crime, since the introduction of photo-driving licences in Northern Ireland.

Sir John Wheeler: None. Photographs have appeared on driving licences in Northern Ireland since 1927.

Cremations

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the latest available annual figure for the number of people cremated.

Mr. Tim Smith: In 1993, 1,926 cremations took place.

Social Workers

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it compulsory for the new trust boards to employ approved social workers to care for *(a)* the mentally sick and *(b)* people with disability; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: Any health and social services trust holding an authorisation from a board to exercise statutory functions under the Mental Health (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 is already under a statutory duty to employ approved social workers and accordingly no further action is necessary.

Approved social workers are only appointed under the Mental Health (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 to exercise functions in relation to applications for admission to hospital and guardianship in respect of people with mental disorder ie mental illness, mental handicap or any other disorder or disability of mind.

HEALTH

Water Births

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will issue guidance clarifying whether a mother has a right to a water birth.

Mr. Sackville: District health authorities as purchasers and hospitals as providers should seek the views of women in determining arrangements for maternity care, including the birth itself. The Expert Maternity Group's report, "Changing Childbirth", calls on the national health service to provide a service which is as responsible as possible to the needs of women.

Circular EL(94)9 already sets out action required by the NHS to implement the recommendations of the expert maternity group within the next five years.

Copies of "Changing Childbirth" and circular EL(94)9 are available in the Library.

AIDS

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what allocations were made to local authorities in the northern region for AIDS support in *(a)* 1993-94 and *(b)* 1994-95; and what was the basis of allocation to such authorities in each of those years.

Mr. Sackville: For 1993-94 AIDS support grant allocations were made on the basis of open-ended bids submitted by local authorities. Local authorities not receiving AIDS support grant were given money under the health alliances scheme for HIV prevention and joint working with health authorities.

For 1994-95 local authorities were invited to submit expenditure plans against indicative allocations of both AIDS support grant and healthy alliances moneys. These allocations were based on confidential information available for the first time and supplied to the Department by the Public Health Laboratory Service on the distribution of AIDS cases by local authority area. Where this formula would mean a reduction in grant in 1994-95, local authorities were advised that there might, in exceptional circumstances, be some scope to adjust allocations on a transitional basis and that applications for additional grant could be made. We hope to issue letters confirming final allocations shortly.

The information requested for the northern region is shown in the table. The figures in brackets relate to allocations under the healthy alliance scheme.

Authority	1993-94 Allocation		1994-95 Indicative allocation	
	AIDS support grant £	Healthy alliances	AIDS support grant £	Healthy alliances
Cleveland	0	(56,000)	27,000	(5,000)
Cumbria	0	(31,000)	10,000	(2,000)
Durham	0	(44,000)	2,000	(6,000)
Gateshead	0	(30,000)	10,000	(2,000)
Newcastle	223,000	(0)	86,000	(64,000)
Northumberland	0	(25,000)	15,000	(3,000)
North Tyneside	0	(54,000)	15,000	(3,000)
South Tyneside	0	(45,000)	15,000	(3,000)
Sunderland	0	(48,000)	10,000	(2,000)

Junior Doctors

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of junior doctors in each region and in England.

Dr. Mawhinney: The most up-to-date figures, for September 1993, are expected to be available in August this year.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the average working hours for junior doctors in each of London's regional health authorities; and what the figures were in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information on the average working hours of junior doctors is not available.

Trends in the patterns of contracted hours are monitored by the regional task forces and are summarised in the table. Data for 1990 are not available.

Percentage contracted for 83 hours a week or less	North West Thames	North East Thames	South East Thames	South West Thames
September 1991	84	66	77	78
September 1992	85	80	75	91
September 1993	100·0	98·9	99·8	99·9

Medical Negligence

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the cost of the proven cases of medical negligence in hospitals in England in the last 10 years; what was the average completion time in such cases; in how many cases medical practitioners were *(a)* dismissed from the health service, *(b)* advised to retire or *(c)* suffered some other sanction; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 14 March at columns *537-38*.

Ophthalmics

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what restrictions exist on ophthalmological departments of hospitals setting themselves up as opticians.

Mr. Sackville: None, provided that this does not significantly interfere with national health service activity or disadvantage NHS patients.

Staff Levels

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the present level of nursing staff in *(a)* London and *(b)* Lewisham.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Cunningham) on 27 April at column *197*.

Maternal Death

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action the Department intends to take to improve co-operation or impose sanctions so that all report forms of maternal death are returned to the confidential inquiry into maternal death.

Mr. Sackville: One of the outstanding features of the confidential inquiry into maternal deaths and one of the factors contributing to its success, has been its voluntary nature. The Department therefore has no plans to impose sanctions on health authorities for the return of report forms notifying maternal deaths.

However, when the latest report, covering the period 1988-90, was disseminated in January of this year, under cover of a leter PLCMO(94)1 from the Chief Medical Officer, the opportunity was taken to remind health professionals of the importance of completing reports promptly. This is a matter that is kept under regular review. Copies of the letter are available in the Library.

Paracetamol Overdose

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of suicide deaths resulted from paracetamol overdose in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Suicide deaths from poisoning where paracetamol is mentioned in the deaths' records. England and Wales 1988-1992

Year	Paracetamol without mention of other drugs		Paracetamol with mention of other drugs	
	Numbers	Percentage of suicide deaths	Numbers	Percentage of suicide deaths
1988	102 (10)	2·4	29 (4)	0·7
1989	64 (3)	1·7	13 (3)	0·3
1990	101 (5)	2·6	5 (–)	0·1
1991	81 (5)	2·1	23 (3)	0·6
1992	99 (11)	2·5	12 (3)	0·3

The figures in brackets are deaths where there was also a mention of alcohol.

Note: This table is compiled using the information available in Table 2 of Series DH2, and Table 10 of Series DH4.

Table 2 of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys publication "Mortality Statistics: cause" Series DH2 lists all three-digit ICD (International Classification of Diseases) categories containing a death, and also all four digit categories that are expected to attain 20 deaths annually.

Table 10 of the OPCS publication "Mortality statistics: injury and poisoning" Series DH4 nos. 15-19, lists all substances mentioned in the records of deaths assigned to accidental and other poisoning by solid or liquid substances. The inclusion of a substance in this list does not, however, imply that it is necessarily toxic. Where two or more substances are mentioned together the contribution, if any, of each to the death is unknown; even where one substance is listed alone there may well be the other factors with an important bearing on death.

Copies of the publications are available in the Library.

Hospital Consultant Posts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospital consultant posts by specialty are currently vacant.

Dr. Mawhinney: The most up-to-date figures, for September 1993, are expected to be available in August 1994.

Health Services, Leeds

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many beds have been closed in *(a)* the Leeds St. James trust and *(b)* the Leeds general infirmary trust since their inception as trusts.

Mr. Sackville: The latest information available is published in "Bed Availability in England 1992-93", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many operations were cancelled in the last three months of the 1993-94 financial year in *(a)* the Leeds St. James trust and *(b)* the Leeds general infirmary trust;

(2) how many patients were not admitted within a month of their second cancelled operation in *(a)* the Leeds St. James trust and *(b)* the Leeds general infirmary trust in the last quarter of the 1993-94 financial year.

Mr. Sackville: These are matters for the St. James's university hospital and United Leeds teaching hospitals national health service trusts. The hon. Member may wish to contact the acting chairman and chairman Councillor Mr. Bernard Atha and Mr. Tony Clegg, respectively.

Health Services, Sunderland

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on which date Sunderland district health authority *(a)* considered and *(b)* resolved to move the Sunderland family health services authority to the Durham road children's centre.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for the Sunderland family health services authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. John Brown, chairman of the authority for details.

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list the dates and occasions on which the Sunderland district health authority consulted with *(a)* the City of Sunderland social services department, *(b)* the Sunderland district health authority clinicians, *(c)* GPs and health personnel involved in the delivery of child health services over the (i) options to unify child health services and (ii) the use of the Sunderland eye infirmary site;

(2) on which date building work and alterations were *(a)* authorised and *(b)* commenced at the Sunderland eye infirmary to accommodate the proposed move of child health services to that site;

(3) if she will give the date on which the Sunderland community health council received public consultation documents concerning the proposed unification of child health services on the Sunderland eye infirmary site;

(4) if she will list the dates or occasions on which the children, parents or carers and other users of the Sunderland health authority child development unit were consulted on the proposed move to the Sunderland eye infirmary site;

(5) on which date the Sunderland district health authority invited tenders for the building and alteration work to accommodate the children's department unit at the Sunderland eye infirmary; how many tenders were received and on what dates;

(6) what was the date of the Sunderland health authority decision to move the child health services to the Sunderland eye infirmary site;

(7) if she will list all the options considered by the Sunderland district health authority for the proposed unification of child health services and the dates on which these options were discussed by the Sunderland district health authority board.

Mr. Sackville: We understand that Sunderland district health authority has conducted formal consultation on a proposal affecting child health services in Sunderland. It is reviewing this proposal, as a result of the consultation. The proposal may be referred to the Northern and Yorkshire regional health authority and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health in due course for a final decision.

Details of the consultation and tendering process are a matter for Sunderland district health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. George Bedell, chairman of the DHA for details.

Data Protection

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she plans to publish guidance on confidentiality in the use and disclosure of national health service information.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave her on 21 January at column 888. We hope to issue this draft guidance, for consultation, shortly.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what rights general practitioners have to sell computerised data on patients.

Mr. Sackville: The disclosure of patient data outside the national health service, whether computerised or manually held and whether for a fee or not, is subject to the common law of confidentiality. Computerised data are also subject to the Data Protection Act 1984. Patient data should not be released outside the NHS without the patient's consent unless disclosure can be justified in the public interest. Data may also be disclosed if required by court order or statute.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to enable patients' notes to be used in the interests of the national health service where it conflicts with interests of patients.

Mr. Sackville: We have no such plans. Patients' notes are compiled primarily for the care and treatment of the individual patient. However, the information in them may be used to help with planning and managing the national health service, and monitoring and maintaining the public health to benefit individual patients and the population as a whole. Most of these wider functions require only anonymised data, and confidentiality is strictly maintained throughout.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to define the need to know in relation to access by non-clinicians to patients' notes in the national health service; and to what parts of the patients' notes managers should have access.

Mr. Sackville: Advice on this will be included in the draft guidance on the confidentiality, use and disclosure of personal health information which we plan to issue for consultation shortly. Patient information is used only on a strict need-to-know basis within the national health service, including bodies acting on behalf of the NHS, for care and treatment and for other NHS purposes. Only that part of the information which a recipient needs to know to fulfil his responsibilities may be disclosed, and the information should be anonymised unless it is essential for the recipient to know the patient's identity.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what access patients may have to their own primary care notes; and to what extent this applies to older notes.

Mr. Sackville: National Health Service bodies have been asked to encourage informal, voluntary arrangements for patients to see their records at the discretion of the health professional principally responsible for their clinical care. Under the Data Protection Act 1984 patients have a right of access to all personal information held on computer, subject to safeguards to protect themselves from serious harm and prevent the identification of third parties. They also have the right of access to their manual health records subject to similar safeguards under the Access to Health Records Act 1990, which applies to records compiled on or after its operative date of 1 November 1991. Access to manual records compiled before that date is at the discretion of the record-holder.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the agencies outside the national health service which have access to patients' notes.

Mr. Sackville: Patient information may not be disclosed to any agencies outside the national health service unless the patient consents, or unless disclosure can be justified in the public interest or is required by court order or statute.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance she has issued in relation to primary computers accessing hospital computer systems including clinical records.

Mr. Sackville: Communications between computers in primary care with computers in hospitals are by predetermined messages which comply with strict standards ensuring security. Such messages do not involve access by one computer to records held in another. If access of that type is proposed in future, strict security guidance will be issued to control it.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who is the final arbiter within a hospital in relation to confidentiality of patients' notes.

Mr. Sackville: National health service bodies and staff have a legal duty of confidence towards patients. Decisions on the use or disclosure of information in patients' notes are the responsibility of the health service body but are usually taken by, or after consultation with, the health professional principally responsible for a patient's care and treatment.

General Practitioners (Cars and Minibuses)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to enable non-fundholding general practitioners to be given the resources to finance cars and minibuses for their surgeries.

Dr. Mawhinney: Under the terms of their cost-plus contract, practice expenses, including necessary motoring expenses, incurred in the delivery of general medical services are fully reimbursed to the profession.

Patients Charter Managers

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of patients charter managers currently employed in regional and district health authorities.

Dr. Mawhinney: Many regional offices, district health authorities and national health service trusts have designated a senior manager to be responsible for patients charter matters.

Office Accommodation

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the office blocks and other accommodation vacated as a result of reorganisation within the national

health service, including the movement of the national health service executive to Leeds and internal changes within the regions; and which buildings are currently unoccupied.

Mr. Sackville: Prior to their move to Leeds, the national health service management executive staff occupied parts of 10 buildings in London. These were State house, Portland court, Richmond house, Russell square, Eileen house, Friars house, Market towers, Euston towers, Milbank tower and Hannibal house. Of those, two have been disposed of and seven remain occupied by Government Departments. Hannibal house is currently empty but is to be partly reoccupied by the Department of Health to allow another building to be disposed of. The move of the NHS management executive to Leeds is saving some £10 million a year on the cost of office space in London and on higher London salaries.

Information is not available centrally in the form requested on accommodation changes in the NHS more widely. These are a matter for the health authority or NHS trust concerned.

Cervical and Breast Cancer

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the upper age limit for routine screening for *(a)* cervical cancer and *(b)* breast cancer recommended by her Department.

Mr. Sackville: The upper age limit for routine screening for cervical cancer is 64 years. Women aged 65 and over who have not had two consecutive negative smear tests in the previous 10 years should also be screened, otherwise smears are available at least every five years on request. The upper age limit for routine screening for breast cancer is 64. Women aged 65 and over may continue to be screened at least every three years on request.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many women *(a)* were diagnosed as having and *(b)* died from (i) cervical cancer and (ii) breast cancer by five yearly age groups in each of the last five years; and what is the total number of women in each of those age groups.

Mr. Sackville: Figures for the incidence of cervical and breast cancer are given in "Cancer Statistics Registrations" Series MB1 nos. 16, 18, 19, 20 and 21 (1988 the latest available); and for deaths in "Mortality Statistics: cause" series DH2 nos. 11-19, copies of which are available in the Library.

Prescription Charges (Asthmatics)

Mr. Hoon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of prescriptions issued to asthmatics in *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94; and how many were (i) free of charge, (ii) covered by a pre-payment certificate, (iii) paid for a straightforward commercial transaction and (iv) paid for in some other way.

Dr. Mawhinney The available information is shown in the table.

Number of prescription items for drugs used in the treatment of asthma (Bronchodilators, Corticosteroids, and Cromoglycate and related therapy[1]) dispensed by community pharmacists and appliance contractors in England in 1992 and 1993

Year	Free of charge	Charge at point of dispensing	Pre-payment certificate	Total
1992	21,088,000	3,879,000	2,396,000	27,363,000
1993	22,912,000	3,817,000	2,496,000	29,225,000

Note:
[1]Drugs used in the treatment of asthma are contained in the British National Formulary sections 3.1 (Bronchodilators), 3.2 (Corticosteroids), and 3.3 (Cromoglycate and related therapy). The therapeutic classifications are based on the September 1992 issue. The drugs for Bronchodilators may be used for other conditions. Patients with asthma may also be prescribed drugs which are not specifically for the treatment of asthma.

NHS Trusts

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many trusts in *(a)* London and *(b)* England failed to meet financial targets set by her Department in 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is shown in the table. Information for 1993-94 will not be available until the accounts of trusts are audited. The majority of trusts had technical issues which affected their ability to meet their financial duties. This does not imply any failure in financial control. In a number of cases the difference between actual financial performance and statutory target is deemed to be immaterial.

	1991-92	1992-93
London[1]	4	9
England	18	73

[1] Trusts located in London boroughs.

NHS Management Executive

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many complaints her Department and the NHS management executive have received in each year since 1990-91.

Mr. Sackville: We do not keep central records of the number of complaints received in the Department and the national health service executive.

GPs, Birmingham

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practitioners there were in Birmingham in each of the last 10 years.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information relating to the Birmingham family health services authority area is shown in the table.

Date 1 October	Number of unrestricted principals	Date 1 October	Number of unrestricted principals
1984	536	1989	574
1985	547	1990	579
1986	556	1991	564
1987	570	1992	563
1988	574	[1]1993	560

[1] Average list size 1,909; England average list size 1,902.

The Medical Practices Committee has advised that since 1990 there have been a number of single-handed general practitioners leaving the medical list and because they had small list sizes their lists were dispersed. There have also been a number of GPs leaving partnerships where the partnerships have succeeded to the outgoing doctor's list but no replacement was required.

Local Medical Committees (Functions)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes are being considered in the functions of local medical committees; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Mawhinney: None.

General Practitioners (Mobile Phones)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to subsidise or reimburse the cost to patients of making essential calls to general practitioners where the latter are using mobile phones in the course of their duties.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Benomyl

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she plans to publish the report concerning the alleged connection between anophthalmia and the use of the pesticide Benomyl; when this report was originally due; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has commissioned a comprehensive epidemiological study of cases of anophthalmia and microphthalmia from the environmental epidemiology unit at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. This is projected to run from January 1994 until November 1995.

Young Persons Unit, Macclesfield

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received about the proposed closure of the young persons unit at Macclesfield.

Mr. Bowis: Ministers have received letters from 10 hon. Members and one from a member of the public.

Psychiatric Services (Young People)

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals she has for ensuring that specialist psychiatric services for young people continue to be available.

Mr. Bowis: We recognise the importance of child and adolescent mental health services and are currently involved in a number of initiatives aimed at promoting their development. These include research and other service-based studies and preparation of a purchasing guide for the relevant health, social services and education authorities.

Children's Homes

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to monitor the placement of children in homes unregistrable under the Children Act 1989.

Mr. Bowis: The social services inspectorate undertook a study of the prevalence and use made of these homes by local authorities in the north-west of England. "Small Unregistered Children's Homes", the report of a study by the social services inspectorate, was published in March and copies are available in the Library. Further studies will be made in due course.

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of the total number of children placed in homes unregistrable under the Children Act 1989.

Mr. Bowis: This information is not separately identified in figures available centrally.

Health Services, Sheffield

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Dulwich (Ms Jowell) of 12 April, *Official Report*, column 72, how much is spent per capita in health services for residents in Sheffield as a whole; and what proportion is spent in treatment by *(a)* district health authorities and *(b)* family health services authorities.

Dr. Mawhinney: 1992-93 expenditure per capita by health authorities in Sheffield was:

	£	*Per cent.*
Sheffield DHA	455	77
Sheffield FHSA	135	23

Nuclear Weapons

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what responsibilities agencies and bodies accountable to her Department are required to assume in the event of an accident or incident involving United States nuclear weapons in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sackville: The arrangements for the response to radiation incidents are essentially the same regardless of the source of the incident. The national health service is responsible for the treatment of any casualties, for monitoring for radiation of anyone who may have been exposed to radiation and for the provision of information and advice to the public.

The National Radiological Protection Board is required to specify emergency reference levels of radiation dose for members of the public in the event of any radiation incident and will provide advice to the operational bodies in the event of an incident.

Medical Audits

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans she has to commission a medical audit of the quality of treatment being received by patients of the general practitioner practices whose annual prescribing costs are 20 per cent. or below the average for practices in their family health service authority areas;

(2) what plans she has to commission a medical audit of the quality of treatment being received by patients of the four general practitioner practices cited in the Audit Commission's recent report on rational prescribing.

Dr. Mawhinney: Family health services authorities are responsible for working with general practitioner practices to make sure that their prescribing is both cost-effective and meets all real clinical needs of patients.

SCOTLAND

Student Awards

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to publish the framework document for the new executive agency to administer student awards in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I have agreed that the new agency established to administer student awards in Scotland should be known as the Student Awards Agency for Scotland; it commenced operations on 5 April. I am arranging for copies of the framework document to be placed in the Vote Office and in the Libraries of the House. I shall remain accountable to Parliament for the activities of the agency, but I am delegating to the chief executive full managerial authority for its day to day operation. For the future, I envisage that the agency will use its greater flexibilities to help meet increasingly demanding targets and to improve further its standards of service.

I will arrange for copies of the executive summary of the agency's corporate plan, which will detail the key performance targets I have set, to be made available shortly.

Registers of Scotland

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has completed the review of the Registers of Scotland executive agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I have reviewed the Registers of Scotland at the end of its first three years as an executive agency and have concluded that agency status should continue. ROS's performance has been evaluated, and the following main conclusions reached:

despite some difficulties in 1990-91, ROS has had a successful first three years;

substantial improvements in quality of service to customers have been achieved in line with the principles of the citizens charter;

backlogs of work have been largely eliminated;

the extension of the Land Register is now proceeding to an agreed timetable; and

a major information systems strategy is being successfully implemented.

the satisfactory introduction of accrual accounts for the year 1992-93 will allow consideration of ROS moving to trading fund status in the near future.

ROS's framework document has been revised and I have placed a copy in the Libraries of both Houses.

I have set ROS the following key targets for 1994-95:

to reduce turnround times for recording writs on the Sasines register from eight to seven weeks.

to reduce turnround times for dealings on the Land Register not attached to a first registration or Transfer of part from 12 to 11·5 weeks.

to implement the agreed Land Register extension programme.

to contain any increase in unit costs in real terms for each of its main categories of work to 1 per cent.

Bird Killing

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, by estate, those occasions on which birds belonging to protected species have been found *(a)* shot, *(b)* poisoned or *(c)* otherwise illegally killed in each of the past five years; and if he will state the number of (i) prosecutions and (ii) convictions which have resulted.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* The information relates to incidents reported to the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department's wildlife incident investigation service. The estate or other location listed is that recorded when each incident was reported. The location of a find has in itself no bearing on the responsibility for the incident.

Reports are made to the procurator fiscal where sufficient evidence is available. In respect of these cases, one prosecution in 1989, three in 1990 and one in 1993 all resulted in convictions. One case is pending.

Location	*Region*	*Species*	*Cause of death*
1989			
Roxburghe Estate	Borders	Buzzard	Mevinphos
Carbeth Estate	Central	Buzzard	Chloralose
Campsie Fells	Central	Peregrine Falcon	Mevinphos
Campsie Fells	Central	Buzzard	Chloralose
Langholm	Dumfries and Galloway	Peregrine Falcon	Mevinphos
Creochs of Balmaghig Castle Douglas	Dumfries and Galloway	Buzzard	Chloralose
Lossiemouth	Grampian	Buzzard	Chloralose
New Pitsligo	Grampian	Buzzard	Mevinphos
Old Meldrum	Grampian	Buzzard	Chloralose
Gordon Bush Est Brora	Highland	Peregrine Falcon	Chloralose
Corntown	Highland	Buzzard	Chloralose
Dalwhinnie	Highland	Hen Harrier	Shot
Lochcarron	Highland	Eagle	Shot
Golspie	Highland	Merlin	Shot
Drumochter Estate	Highland	Eagle	Chloralose
Black Isle	Highland	Red Kite	Chloralose
Islay Estate	Strathclyde	Raven	Mevinphos
Islay Estate	Strathclyde	Buzzard	Mevinphos
Kilbirnie	Strathclyde	Peregrine Falcon	Shot

Location	Region	Species	Cause of death
Monzie Estate, Crieff	Tayside	Buzzard	Chloralose
Fincastle	Tayside	Tawny Owl	Shot
Caenlochan NR	Tayside	Eagle	Shot
Blair Atholl	Tayside	Buzzard	Shot
E. Loch Ollay, South Uist	Western Isles	Raven/Crow	Chloralose
1990			
Cromlix Estate	Central	Buzzard/Hen Harrier	Chloralose
Flanders Moss	Central	Buzzard	Chloralose
Aberdeenshire	Grampian	Sparrowhawk	Shot
Den of Pitlurg	Grampian	Buzzard	Chloralose
Rosehaugh Estate, Black Isle	Highland	Buzzard	Chloralose
Ledmore Estate, Lairg	Highland	Buzzard	Chloralose
Edderton, Tain	Highland	Buzzard	Chloralose
Ledmore Estate, Lairg	Highland	Eagle and Gull	Chloralose
Alness	Highland	Buzzard	Chloralose
Strathpeffer	Highland	Buzzard	Chloralose
Edinburgh	Lothian	Buzzard	Chloralose
Hopetoun Estate, Abington	Strathclyde	Buzzard	Chloralose
Forfar	Tayside	Sparrowhawk	Shot
Glenfernate Estate Enochdu, Blairgowrie	Tayside	Buzzard	Chloralose
Loch Earn	Tayside	Buzzard	Chloralose
Grimersta Estate, Lewis	Western Isles	Eagle chick	Chloralose
1991			
Hawkhill	Fife	Buzzard	Strychnine
Forres	Grampian	Buzzards/Crows	Chloralose
Lybster	Highland	Buzzard	Chloralose
Seafield Estate	Highland	Buzzard	Chloralose
Rosehaugh Estate, Black Isle	Highland	Buzzards	Mevinphos
Abington	Strathclyde	Hen harrier	Shot
Sorn	Strathclyde	Buzzard/crows	Chloralose
Dougarie Estate, Arran	Strathclyde	Eagle	Chloralose
Glean Eason Biorach, Arran	Strathclyde	Eagle	Shot
Kelburn Country Park, Renfrew	Strathclyde	Buzzard	Chloralose
Blairgowrie	Tayside	Crossbills	Shot
1992			
Endrickmouth NNR	Central	Buzzard	Chloralose
Dalswinton Estate Auldgirth	Dumfermline and Gall	Buzzard	Chloralose
Invercauld Estate Crathie	Grampian	Buzzard	Chloralose
Huntly	Grampian	Sparrowhawk	Chloralose
Tomatin	Highland	Eagle	Chloralose
Dochfour Estate	Highland	Buzzard	Chloralose
Unknown	Highland	Swan	Shot
Cawdor Estate	Highland	Buzzard and magpie	Strychnine
Balival Farm, Conon Bridge	Highland	Hen harrier	Strychnine
Kincraig	Highland	Buzzard	Shot
Careston Estate, Brechin	Tayside	Buzzard	Chloralose
Over Cardney Estate, Dunkeld	Tayside	Buzzard	Chloralose
Fortingall	Tayside	Buzzard	Chloralose
Glenbeich and Ardveich Farms near Loch Tay	Tayside	Buzzard	Chloralose
Straloch Farm, Blairgowrie	Tayside	Buzzard	Chloralose
1993			
Galashiels	Border	Red Kite	Chloralose
Lothian Estate, Monteviot	Border	Osprey	Shot
Stracathro	Grampian	Buzzard	Chloralose
Stracathro Hill	Grampian	Buzzard	Chloralose
Alness	Highland	Buzzard	Difenacoum
Aberarder Estate	Highland	Eagle	Carbofuran
Gledfield Estate, Ardgay	Highland	Buzzard	Chloralose

Location	Region	Species	Cause of death
South Balkeith Farm, Tain	Highland	Buzzards, rook and jackdaws	Carbofuran
Glenberg Estate, Grantown/Spey	Highland	Buzzard	Chloralose
Ralia Estate	Highland	Buzzard	Chloralose
Assich Forest Nairn	Highland	Buzzard	Chloralose
Woodall Estate, Calderbank	Strathclyde	Buzzard	Chloralose
Carruth Estate	Strathclyde	Buzzard	Chloralose
Bougilie, Arran	Strathclyde	Eagle	Shot
Mauchline	Strathclyde	Buzzard	Chloralose
Parleyer Estate, Aberfeldy	Tayside	Buzzard	Carbofuran
Loansfold Farm and Blindswell Farm, Perth	Tayside	Buzzard	Chloralose

Abortions

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many NHS abortions were performed on women who were under 13 weeks pregnant and resident in each health board area in Scotland in each year since 1990; and how many of these operations involved admission and discharge of the patient on the same day.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 27 April 1994]:* The figures for 1993 are not yet available. The information for 1990-92 by health board of residence is as follows:

Under 13 weeks—Total

	1990	1991	1992
Scotland	8,904	9,814	9,624
Argyll and Clyde	617	640	511
Ayrshire and Arran	555	590	625
Borders	118	160	146
Dumfries and Galloway	204	214	216
Fife	675	708	678
Forth Valley	427	460	487
Grampian	1,009	1,131	1,088
Greater Glasgow	1,486	1,689	1,778
Highland	386	377	376
Island Boards[1]	73	69	92
Lanarkshire	747	837	836
Lothian	1,602	1,882	1,792
Tayside	993	1,046	981
Resident Outwith Scotland	12	11	18

Under 13 weeks—Admission and discharge same day

	1990	1991	1992
Scotland	5,498	7,286	8,008
Argyll and Clyde	421	488	396
Ayrshire and Arran	372	556	588
Borders	91	151	137
Dumfries and Galloway	3	19	17
Fife	492	547	535
Forth Valley	126	316	419
Grampian	658	829	818
Greater Glasgow	571	1,023	1,547
Highland	275	293	302
Island Boards[1]	12	10	15
Lanarkshire	139	267	570
Lothian	1,429	1,798	1,722
Tayside	904	983	926
Resident Outwith Scotland	5	6	16

[1] Orkney, Shetland and Western Isles Health Boards.

Ambulance Service, Glasgow

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the success rate for the Scottish ambulance service, Greater Glasgow area, in percentage terms of achieving its ORCON standards for *(a)* reaction to a 999 call and *(b)* reaching the site.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 27 April 1994]:* Activation and response times in Glasgow have improved since 1992-93. This improvement has been secured despite a 5 per cent. increase in demand.

The information is as follows:

Target	Achieved 1992-93 Per cent.	Achieved 1993-94 Per cent.
Activation time		
95 per cent. in 3 minutes	83	92
Response times		
50 per cent. in 7 minutes	32	38
95 per cent. in 14 minutes	80	89

Prison Officers

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many days work have been lost by prison officers due to illness in Scotland in each of the last five years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 27 April 1994]:* Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Scottish Prison Service under its chief executive, Mr. E. W. Frizzell. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Mr. John McFall, dated 3 May 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Question about days work lost by prison officers, due to illness, in Scotland, in each of the last five years.

Information held centrally relates to all days covered by sick certificates and does not necessarily equate to working days lost. It also includes all prison service grades, not just prison officers.

The information is as follows:

Year	Number
1989	80,496
1990	73,980
1991	75,602

Year	Number
1992	80,781
1993	97,403

Departmental Publications

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland for how many regular publications he was responsible in 1993-94; what was their circulation; and how many were obtainable by subscription.

Mr. Lang: There were 66 regular publications published and sold by the Scottish Office in 1993-94. All are available by subscription or standing order. There are 707 addresses on the subscription file.

Local Government Etc. (Scotland) Bill

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give an estimate of the total cost to his Department of all aspects of *(a)* the consultation paper on the structure of local government of June 1991 and subsequent consideration, *(b)* the White Paper of July 1993 and *(c)* all correspondence, meetings and briefings before and during the second reading debate and the committee stage of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill.

Mr. Stewart: The total cost of the consultation paper "The Case for Change", which was published in June 1991, of the consultation paper "Shaping the New Councils", published in October 1992 and of associated material, including leaflets, a video and so on, was approximately £148,800. The cost of the White Paper "Shaping the Future—The New Councils" and related material was £58,200. It is not possible to identify or quantify administrative costs incurred by the Scottish Office which are related specifically to correspondence, meetings and briefings about the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many civil servants from his Department have been required to travel to London in connection with the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill during each week since 16 January; and if he will give the number from each grade, the number of days and the costs of *(a)* travel and *(b)* subsistence.

Mr. Stewart: Details of the civil servants travelling to London in connection with the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill since 16 January are given in the table:

Civil Servants travelling to London in connection with the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill

	Number of officials of each grade	*Number of "man" days (Number of officials × number of days)*	*Total number of overnight stays*[1]
17 January 1994			
Grade 5	1		
Grade 7	2		
Administrative trainee (Europe)	1	4	4
24 January 1994			
None		0	0
31 January 1994			
Grade 5	1		
Grade 6	1		
Grade 7	1		
Administration trainee (Europe)	1		
Executive officer	1		
Personal secretary	1		
Administration assistant	1	32	26
7 February 1994			
Grade 5	1		
Grade 7	3		
Administration trainee (Europe)	1		
Executive Office	1		
Personal Secretary	1		
Administrative Assistant	1	32	24
14 February 1994			
Grade 5	2		
Grade 6	1		
Grade 7	3		
Administrative trainee (Europe)	1		
Executive officer	1		
Personal secretary	1		
Administrative assistant	1	34	26
21 February 1994			
Grade 5	1		
Grade 6	1		
Grade 7	2		
Higher executive officer	1		
Administrative trainee (Europe)	1		
Executive officer	2		
Personal secretary	1		
Administrative officer	2	34	25
28 February 1994			
Grade 3	1		
Grade 5	4		
Grade 6	1		
Grade 7	4		
Higher Executive Officer	2		
Admin Trainee (Europe)	1		
Executive Officer	1		
Personal Secretary	1		
Admin Officer	1	54	44
7 March 1994			
Grade 4	1		
Grade 5	3		
Grade 7	6		
Higher Executive Officer	2		
Admin Trainee (Europe)	1		
Executive Officer	1		
Personal Secretary	1		
Admin Officer	1	54	41
14 March 1994			
Grade 5	4		
Grade 7	6		
Senior Professional and Technical Officer	1		
Higher Executive Officer (Development)	1		
Higher Executive Officer	2		
Admin Trainee (Europe)	1		
Executive Officer	1		
Personal Secretary	1		

	Number of officials of each grade	Number of "man" days (Number of officials × number of days)	Total number of overnight stays[1]
Admin Assistant	1	51	39
21 March 1994			
Grade 5	3		
Grade 6	1		
Grade 7	5		
Higher Executive Officer	1		
Admin Trainee (Europe)	1		
Personal Secretary	2		
Admin Officer	1		
Admin Assistant	1		
Typist	1	45	40
28 March 1994			
Grade 5	1		
Grade 6	1		
Grade 7	1		
Higher Executive Officer	1		
Personal Secretary	1		
Admin Officer	1		
Admin Assistant	1		
Typist	1	23	22
11 April 1994			
Grade 5	2		
Grade 6	1		
Grade 7	4		
Higher Executive Officer	1		
Personal Secretary	1		
Admin Officer	1		
Admin Assistant	1		
Typist	1	39	31
18 April 1994			
Grade 5	5		
Grade 6	4		
Grade 7	10		
Higher Executive Officer	3		
Admin Trainee (Europe)	1		
Executive Officer	1		
Personal Secretary	1		
Admin Assistant	1	63	51
Totals 152 official journeys		465	373

[1] Overnight stays include only those spent in London and not nights spent away from home whilst travelling between London and Edinburgh on the sleeper service.

It is possible to produce only broad estimates of travel and subsistence costs, as follows:

(a) Travel

A return air journey costs approximately £220.

A return train journey including travel by sleeper and overnight travel allowance costs approximately £180.

Assuming, therefore, an average cost of £200 for each official travelling the total travel cost is approximately £30,400.

(b) Subsistence

Subsistence is paid at the rate of £65·15 to every official required to spend a night in London.

Using the total number of overnight stays required in London, the approximate subsistence cost is £24,300.

"Shaping the New Councils"

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library copies of the submissions in response to the consultative document on local governments, "Shaping the New Councils", from Dumbarton district which did not request confidentiality.

Mr. Stewart: Arrangements have been made for copies of those responses on the consultation document "Shaping the New Councils" relating to Dumbarton district to be placed in the Library of the House.

Respite Care

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of children with disabilities have access to respite care.

Mr. Stewart: This information is not held centrally.

Cigarettes Sales

Mr. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the numbers of reported cases of illegal selling of cigarettes to children and the number of prosecutions following such sales in the past year.

Mr. Stewart: Five reports were submitted to procurators fiscal for offences under the Children and Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Act 1991 concerning alleged illegal sales of cigarettes to children in the period 1 March 1992 to 31 July 1993. Four of these reports resulted in prosecutions.

A727 and A726

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the routes of the A727 and the A726; if he will specify how those roads, and the designation of those roads, has been altered since 1975; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The A726 is a principal road and runs from Strathaven to Erskine bridge. The A727 which ran from Clarkston to Cathcart is no longer a classified route. In 1980 part of this route was declassified and the remainder was reclassified A730, B766, B768, B762 and B767.

The responsibility for these roads lies with the local roads authority, Strathclyde regional council, and the information regarding alterations to these roads is not held by central Government.

Lambs

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 12 April, *Official Report*, column *121*, if he will place in the Library the published Scottish Office research on viable lambs predated by foxes.

Sir Hector Monro: A copy of "Scavenging and Predation upon Sheep and Lambs in West Scotland" pubished in 1984 has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to the average percentage of yearly lamb loss caused by hypothermia.

Sir Hector Monro: No information on this is held centrally.

Fox-hunting

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce legislation to ban fox-hunting in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government have no plans for legislation in this area. Over the years, there have been a number of private Members' Bills whose purpose has been to ban or to regulate various forms of hunting, including fox-hunting, but to date none of these Bills has commanded sufficient support in Parliament to become law. The Government have consistently adopted a position of neutrality towards such legislation and regard this issue as very much a matter for individual conscience and decision.

Trust Hospitals

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total cost of redecoration and furnishing of chief executives' and senior managers' offices in each trust hospital to date since it acquired trust status.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is not held centrally.

Scottish Power

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of Scottish Power; what matters were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend meets representatives of Scottish Power from time to time to discuss a range of issues.

Rats

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what studies he has had made available to him during the past five years on the infestation of sewers by rats; what plans he has to accelerate the elimination of rats from sewers; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: No studies have been made available to my right hon. Friend in the last five years on the infestation of sewers in Scotland by rats. Any evidence of such infestation would be dealt with by the regional and islands councils' drainage departments and it is for the authorities to determine the appropriate action. Any incidents in recent years have been of a minor nature and dealt with promptly by the authorities.

Speedwell

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice her Department offers farmers and growers on the eradication of Veronica species, commonly known as speedwell; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: Advice to farmers on the control of all weed species is available from the Scottish Agricultural college through its network of local advisory offices.

Sight Tests

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many NHS sight tests took place in each financial year since 1984-85 in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 April 1994]:* The number of national health service sight tests paid for by health boards in each of the financial years from 1984-85 to 1993-94 is shown in the table.

National health service sight tests

Year	*Number*
1984-85	884,727
1985-86	913,901
1986-87	965,160
1987-88	1,098,145
1988-89	1,169,610
1989-90	[1]475,479
1990-91	432,885
1991-92	496,598
1992-93	538,684

[1] Since 1 April 1989 free national health service sight tests have been available only to children, full-time students under 19, those in receipt of income support or family credit, the registered blind and partially sighted, complex lens users, those who hold an AG2 exemption certificate from the health benefits unit, diagnosed diabetic or glaucoma sufferers and close relatives aged 40 or over of glaucoma sufferers.

Hospital Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average number of *(a)* beds available and *(b)* new accident and emergency cases during 1993-94, by regional health board; and what were the figures per 1,000 population.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 April 1994]:* Information on average available staffed acute beds and accident and emergency new out-patient attendances for the year ended 31 December 1993—latest available—is set out in the table:

	Average available staffed acute[1] beds		*Accident and Emergency[2] New Out-Patient attendances*	
	Number	*Rate per 1,000 population[3]*	*Number*	*Rate per 1,000 population[3]*
Argyll and Clyde	1,211	2·8	113,313	261
Ayrshire and Arran	1,111	2·9	81,158	216
Borders	350	3·3	15,840	151
Dumfries and Galloway	407	2·8	31,235	211
Fife	782	2·2	64,031	183
Forth Valley	591	2·2	55,907	205
Grampian	1,899	3·6	104,326	200
Greater Glasgow	3,954	4·3	308,450	336
Highland	736	3·6	40,121	195
Lanarkshire	1,603	2·9	110,817	197
Lothian	2,486	3·3	142,429	190
Orkney	91	4·6	1,930	98
Shetland	46	2·0	4,601	203
Tayside	1,653	4·2	99,493	252

	Average available staffed acute[1] beds		Accident and Emergency[3] New Out-Patient attendances	
	Number	Rate per 1,000 population[2]	Number	Rate per 1,000 population[2]
Western Isles	103	3·5	4,918	168
Scotland	17,022	3·3	1,178,569	231

[1] Comprises acute (including GP acute), supra-area and special categories. Excludes obstetric, long stay, psychiatric and mental handicap specialties.
[2] Rates based on Registrar General mid-1992 population estimates. Health board area rates are based on total resident population and therefore do not take into account the cross-border flow of patients for treatment.
[3] All patients who present at an accident and emergency department, some of whom would become in-patients.

Health Service Staff

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were employed at the latest available date for each grade in the administrative and clerical pay group of the national health service, for grades 0 to 12 in the senior managers pay group, for each grade in the ambulance staffs pay group and the ambulance officers pay group, and for general managers and chief executives in the national health service; and if he will express the figures as numbers and as full-time equivalents.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 April 1994]:* The numbers in whole-time equivalent terms of administrative and clerical staff and ambulance staff by grade and sex employed by the NHS at 30 September 1993 are given in the table. Not all chief executives can be identified separately and are therefore included in the general manager category. Senior manager grades 0-12, introduced in October 1993, are not reflected in the data which refer to the "old" scales.

Administrative and Clerical and Ambulance Staff; by grade and sex: as at 30 September 1993

	Headcount			Whole time equivalent		
Administrative and Clerical staff group	21,008	3,724	17,284	18,310·7	3,664·3	14,646·4
General Manager[1]	83	75	8	83·0	75·0	8·0
Senior Managers	1,079	675	404	1,068·6	670·6	398·0
Pay spine point 1-7	97	82	15	95·9	80·9	15·0
8-14	316	236	80	313·7	234·5	79·2
15-21	396	220	176	391·2	218·6	172·6
22-30	230	113	117	227·8	112·6	115·2
Other	40	24	16	40·0	24·0	16·0
Protected Grades	23	22	1	22·4	21·4	1·0
Grade 10	26	19	7	24·6	19·0	5·6
Grade 9	61	43	18	58·4	43·0	15·4
Grade 8	219	159	60	216·8	159·0	57·8
Grade 7	604	287	317	590·3	286·3	304·0
Grade 6	1,119	511	608	1,092·0	509·6	582·5
Grade 5	1,227	417	810	1,193·2	412·5	780·7
Grade 4	2,197	423	1,774	2,110·6	418·3	1,692·3
Grade 3	6,256	434	5,822	5,583·2	428·3	5,154·9
Grade 2	7,931	606	7,325	6,110·2	568·4	5,541·8
Grade 1	100	13	87	74·6	13·0	61·0
Other[2]	83	40	43	83·0	40·0	43·0
Ambulance						
Ambulance/control officer	230	136	95	227·8	134·6	93·0
Ambulance officer	124	122	2	124·0	122·0	2·0
Assistant senior officer	3	3	—	3·0	3·0	—
Band 2	30	29	1	30·0	29·0	1·0
Band 1	91	90	1	91·0	90·0	1·0
Control officer	106	13	93	103·8	12·6	91·0
Grade 2	18	1	17	18·0	1·0	17·0
Grade 1	88	12	76	85·8	11·6	74·0
Ambulance staff	2,227	1,932	295	2,162·9	1,889·9	273·0
Ambulanceman	654	478	176	589·9	435·9	154·0
Loading	222	214	8	222·0	214·0	8·0
Qualified	1,253	1,161	92	1,253·0	1,161·0	92·0
Trainee	98	79	19	98·0	79·0	19·0

[1] Includes General Managers, Chief Executives, Unit General Managers.
[2] Includes management trainees and non Whitley scales.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many applications the Forestry Commission made for financial assistance from the European Community for each of the last five years; what was the purpose of each application; and what has been the success of these applications;

(2) whether an application has been made by the Forestry Commission to the European Community for financial assistance to help with the development of community forests.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 27 April 1994]:* Council regulation 2328/91, and its successor Council regulation 2080/92, provide for member states to claim part-reimbursement from the European Community of eligible expenditure to support the afforestation of agricultural land and other forestry operations on farms. Under these provisions, the Forestry Commission has made annual applications for, and received, the sums shown for woodland grant scheme and farm woodland scheme planting grants for each of the last five years. The woodland grant scheme's community woodland supplement, which was introduced to encourage the development of community forests, is included in the provisions and the first claim for reimbursement of eligible expenditure will be made this year.

Year of eligible expenditure	*EC reimbursement £ million*
1989	0·3
1990	1·4
1991	2·2
1992	2·0
1993	3·8

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to change the structure of the Forestry Commission.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 27 April 1994]:* The Forestry Ministers are currently considering the report of the forestry review group, which was asked by Ministers to review, among other things, the options for the ownership and management of Forestry Commission woodlands. An announcement will be made in due course.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Accidents

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what responsibilities *(a)* United States diplomatic and military officials and *(b)* British officials would assume in the event of an accident or incident involving United States nuclear weapons in the United Kingdom;

(2) what regulations cover the procedures that would be adopted in the event of an accident or incident involving United States nuclear weapons in the United Kingdom in peacetime;

(3) which agency would assume primary responsibility under current emergency planning procedures in the event of an accident or incident involving United States nuclear weapons in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hanley: In the highly unlikely event of an accident involving nuclear weapons in the United Kingdom, those United Kingdom regulations which are relevant to any radiological hazard to the public would be applied, irrespective of whether the weapon in question belonged to the United Kingdom or the United States.

The general responsibilities of British officials in the combined response to any major incident affecting public safety are described in the Home Office publication "Dealing with Disaster". For an accident involving nuclear weapons in the United Kingdom, the lead Government Department would be the MOD. The civil police would co-ordinate the activities of all those responding at and around the scene. The same principles would apply in the event of an accident involving United States weapons.

Within this framework, the United States would supply specialised personnel and equipment to render safe any damaged United States nuclear weapon and to recover it and any components into United States custody, and would provide advice on any specific measures necessary to maintain public safety.

Exercise Diver Mist

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the Exercise Diver Mist taking place in Suffolk.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on 25 April, *Official Report*, columns *84-85*.

Search and Rescue

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the civilian search and rescue missions flown by helicopters from RAF Chivenor, RAF Brawdy and RAF Valley between 00·01 hours and 23·59 hours on Tuesday 19 April, including time of call and time of arrival on scene.

Mr. Hanley: The search and rescue helicopter flight at RAF Chivenor was called to one incident on the day in question. The call for assistance from the rescue co-ordination centre was received at RAF Chivenor at 15.35. The helicopter was stood down before reaching the incident scene and the rescue was completed by the Fishguard lifeboat. The flights at RAF Brawdy and RAF Valley were not involved in any civil search and rescue missions during that day.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the purposes of the plans to transfer the area of responsibility of the search and rescue facility at RAF Brawdy, Dyfed to that of RAF Chivenor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: My Department's decision to move the RAF search and rescue flight from Brawdy to Chivenor formed part of our overall plan for the basing of RAF search and rescue helicopters in the United Kingdom as set out in the 1992 open government document "The Future Provision of RAF Search and Rescue Helicopters", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

This decision, which has recently been re-examined in the light of subsequent developments and reconfirmed, was based on operational factors relating to the military requirement for search and rescue while maximising the effectiveness of the RAF search and rescue force for civil search and rescue operations.

RAF Chivenor

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans there are to close RAF Chivenor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: On 7 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *177*, I announced proposals to cease flying training at RAF Chivenor from 1 October 1994 and to place Chivenor on to a care and maintenance basis. This proposal

has been the subject of consultation with the trade unions and other interested parties. The consultation period has ended and I hope to be able to make an announcement shortly.

Specialised Image Intensifiers

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 15 April, *Official Report*, column *348*, what other actions he has taken to ensure the maintenance of a United Kingdom source of specialised image intensifiers: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: None.

Defence Equipment

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 15 April, *Official Report*, column *348*, what other decisions he has made to ensure the maintenance of a United Kingdom source of a particular type of defence equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Where relevant, industrial considerations and the importance of maintaining a domestic source are taken into account in my Department's procurement decisions. The weight given to these factors will vary from case to case. Records are not kept which identify any other decisions which were taken specifically to maintain a United Kingdom source of a particular type of defence equipment.

Armed Forces Pay Review Body

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy regarding the provision of information on the work of the Armed Forces Pay Review Body: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The Armed Forces Pay Review Body—AFPRB—is an independent review body and as such it is not my Department's practice to provide information on matters which are the sole responsibility of that body, such as the appointment of consultants. My Department will of course provide information on the work of the AFPRB where such matters fall within our responsibility.

RNSD Eaglescliffe

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current estimate per person of the cost of relocating MOD personnel from RNSD Eaglescliffe to Bath.

Mr. Hanley: The current average cost of a permanent move in the public interest within the United Kingdom is £30,000. This represents a reduction from the 1993 average due to savings associated with the relocation company scheme.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the office block at RNSD Eaglescliffe will be left vacant by the removal of mobile staff to Bath.

Mr. Hanley: The planned relocation of Naval Support Command Headquarters posts at Eaglescliffe to the Bath area should result in some 75 per cent. of the office block at Eaglescliffe becoming vacant. My Department is currently looking for alternative occupants for the building from other Government departments.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much was spent on the recladding and updating of the store sheds at RNSD Eaglescliffe.

Mr. Hanley: It was considered necessary to reclad the store sheds at Eaglescliffe for fire safety reasons. A total of £4,850,000 has been spent on this programme between October 1989 and February 1993.

Defence Cost Studies

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to announce the results of defence cost study (10).

Mr. Aitken: We hope to make public the bulk of our conclusions arising from the defence costs study before the summer recess.

Departmental Publications

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for how many regular publications he was responsible in 1993-94; what was their circulation; and how many were obtainable by subscription.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) on 24 February 1994, *Official Report*, column *383*. The three publications referred to in that answer are all available by subscription.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 29 April 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Wessex Regional Health Authority

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what were the costs to the public purse of the abandoned case at Winchester Crown court in respect of conspiracy to defraud Wessex regional health authority.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I am not able to state the amount of the costs to the public purse as a re-trial was ordered by the trial judge and accurate figures will not be available until the case has been concluded and the bills of costs determined. In any event, not all these costs will have been wasted, as much of the preparation work by solicitors and counsel will not need repeating.

Hague Conference on Private International Law

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the 1993-94 expenditure on the permanent bureau of the Hague Conference on Private International Law; and how many staff are employed and paid under this expenditure vote.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The United Kingdom's expenditure on the permanent bureau of the Hague Conference in 1993-94 amounted in total to £55,931·03 —Dfl. 158,115·73. This amount was paid as a lump sum contribution in August 1993 and represents the United Kingdom's contribution towards the permanent bureau's total budget of Dfl. 2,317,418 for 1993-94.

There are currently 12 permanent staff employed by the bureau. The latest available figures show that the total salary bill for the financial year 1 July 1992 to 30 June 1993 was Dfl. 1,452,348.

Juvenile Court Magistrates Panels

Mr. Cox: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women from an ethnic community were members of a juvenile court magistrates' panel for courts covering the Greater London area as of 20 April.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Information is available only in respect of the Inner London Commission area in which there are currently 10 men and nine women from the ethnic minority community sitting as members of the youth court panel, formerly the juvenile court panel.

Civil Enforcement Agencies

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what analysis has been reached by his Department of the responses received to the consultation paper on the organisation and management of civil enforcement agents.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The response to the public consultation was positive; the vast majority of consultees were pleased that the issues had been raised and agreed that the law should be simplified and procedural changes made to rule out abuses which might occur under the present system. A wide variety of views were received on the options set out in the consultation paper. The options are still being considered by the Lord Chancellor who will want to discuss his proposals with Government colleagues before making any further announcements.

Legal Aid

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will introduce a limitation on the amount of legal aid available to persons accused of fraud.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I am examining the provision of criminal legal aid as a whole as part of the fundamental review of my Department's expenditure currently under way. But any changes that may be made will need to take account of the presumption of innocence.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what are the final expenditure figures for legal aid for 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Final figures are not yet available. However, provisional outturn figures show that the net cost of legal aid in 1993-94 was £1,210 million compared to a provision of £1,283 million. This represents an increase of £117 million on the previous year. Of the £73 million underspend against provision in 1993-94, £39 million related to criminal legal aid where the number of bills paid fell short of expectations, reflecting the fall in business in the criminal courts. Most of the remaining shortfall, £27 million, related to civil legal aid.

Payments to the legal aid fund, particularly in respect of costs and damages recovered, amounted to £21 million more than anticipated, which we believe is mainly because of speedier settlements resulting from the transfer of business from the High Court to the county court following from the civil justice review. In addition, the number of civil bills paid were some 3 per cent. lower than expected, resulting in a reduction in expenditure of around £6 million. The remainder of the shortfall was due to green form expenditure being some 2 per cent. lower than estimated and the number of assistance by way of representation bills being some 30 per cent. lower than expected, resulting in shortfalls in expenditure of £3 million and £4 million respectively.

Executive Agencies

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what are the key performance targets for Her Majesty's Land Registry and the Public Record Office executive agencies for 1994-95.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The tables set out the key performance targets that the Lord Chancellor has set for Her Majesty's Land Registry and for the Public Record Office.

Her Majesty's Land Registry Executive Agency
Key performance targets 1994-95

Indicator	*Target*
1. *Financial*	
Return on average capital employed:	6 per cent.
External Financing Limit:	0 per cent.
2. *Efficiency*	
Progressive reduction in unit costs in real terms:	To achieve at least 2 per cent. reduction in the year.
3. *Productivity*	
Progressive increase in output per post:	To achieve at least 2 per cent. increase in the year.
4. *Speed of service*	
Percentage of pre-completion applications handled in 3 days:	No less than 98 per cent.
Average handling time for post-completion applications:	Where no requisitions arise, no more than 5 weeks.
5. *Quality of service*	
Percentage of pre-completion applications handled free of error:	No less than 99·75 per cent.
Percentage of post-completion applications handled free of error:	No less than 97·70 per cent.
6. *Development of Land Registration*	
Number of computerised registers:	To increase the number of registered titles in computerised format to 10·50 million.

Note
Fuller details of the Registry's performance targets are given in its "Business Plan", which is available from Her Majesty's Land Registry.

Public Record Office Executive Agency
Key performance targets 1994-95

Indicator	*Target*
1. *Efficiency*	
Indicator: Unit cost of selecting and accessioning records	To decrease the unit cost of selecting and accessioning records by 3 per cent.
Indicator: Unit costs of providing record storage space, document productions and reader services	To reduce the unit cost of providing records storage space by 1 per cent.
	To decrease the cost per document produced to readers by 4 per cent.
	To increase the reader service costs per reader visit (Census microfilms) by no more than 2 per cent.
	To decrease the reader service costs per reader visit (other records) by 2 per cent.
Backlog of records awaiting review:	To identify and quantify the backlog in two departments.
	To reduce the known backlog of records over 30 years old which have not been processed, by 1,500 feet (current known backlog 5,500 feet).
Storage of records:	81 per cent. of records to be stored to an acceptable standard (standard as recommended in BS5454).
2. *Quality of service*	
Reader satisfaction:	87 per cent. of reader satisfaction survey forms returned to have an overall assessment of "good", or better.

Indicator	*Target*
Response times for answering correspondence:	To send replies to letters requiring a response by stock letter within one week. To send replies to other letters to Reader Services and Reprographic, Publishing and Publicity Departments (including those requiring estimates for copies) within three weeks.
Document production times:	To make documents (excluding documents produced on microform, or stored at Hayes, or requiring special handling) available to readers within the following maximum times: Kew: 35 minutes Chancery Lane: 40 minutes

Note:
Fuller details of the Office's performance targets are given in its "Business Plan", which is available from the Public Record Office.

PRIME MINISTER

D-day Commemoration

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Prime Minister what was the involvement of the Cabinet Office in the appointment of Lowe Bell Communications as consultants to the D-day Commemoration.

The Prime Minister: None.

Drugs

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton (Mr. Callaghan) of 26 April, at column 101, concerning the actions and plans of Her Majesty's Government to fight drug addiction and related crime, what powers the Government possess to stop and search all cargo or persons wishing to enter the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise has powers to stop and search persons, vessels, aircraft, vehicles and their cargo, wishing to enter the United Kingdom, in respect of prohibited goods, including drugs and firearms. As a contribution to the fight against drug addiction and related crime, Customs uses these powers to combat the smuggling of prohibited goods.

War Widows

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister what representations were made to him by the Royal British Legion to receive a deputation of war widows to discuss the Government's decision to reverse a decision of the High Court by amending the Service Pensions Order to restrict the pension entitlement of widows or ex-service men; what reply he made; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 28 April 1994]:* As far as I am aware, none.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister what direct consultations Ministers had with *(a)* the Royal British Legion and *(b)* the Normandy Veterans Association about the Government's decision to reverse a decision of the High Court by amending the Service Pensions Order to restrict the pension entitlement of ex-service personnel and war widows; and if he will now himself directly consult the two organisations on the Government's decision.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 28 April 1994]:* The customary mechanism for consultation on proposed changes to war pensions legislation is through the statutory Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions. The committee includes representatives of several ex-service organisations, including two members each from the Royal British Legion and the Royal British Legion (Scotland).

The Minister with special responsibility for war pensions at the Department of Social Security, my noble Friend, Lord Astor, consulted the committee on the recent proposals to amend legislation following a decision of the High Court which suggested that the law did not clearly reflect long-standing policy. We always consider, as we did on this occasion, any other points made by any individual or organisation.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Parliamentary Boundaries

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* members of the public and *(b)* organisations have sought a reference back to the boundary commission's revised proposals for South Yorkshire in respect of the boundaries for Barnsley, East and Mexborough, and Don Valley constituencies; and on what date he hopes a decision will be announced.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that the parliamentary boundary commission for England has received representations concerning the revised recommendations for South Yorkshire in respect of the boundaries for Barnsley, East and Mexborough, and Don Valley constituences from 144 members of the public and from 17 organisations. These were evenly divided between representations in support of the commission's revised recommendations and those which objected to them. A further 1,249 signatures were put to petitions relating to the recommendations. A news release announcing a decision in respect of the boundaries of the Barnsley, East and Mexborough, and Don Valley constituencies will be issued in May 1994.

EC Fraud Investigations

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he is taking to ensure that investigations into fraud in the EC are made immediately and publicly and that individuals are brought to account.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. and learned Friend gave on 4 March 1994 to a question from my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) at column *934*.

Murder

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, (1) pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) of 21 April, *Official Report*, column 1034, if he will list any family relationship of the victims of the first and second murder to the murderer;

(2) how many convicted murderers released from prison since 1979 killed again; and if he will list the nature of the second conviction and any family relationship of the victims of the first murder and the second killing to the offender.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Nine murderers released from prison on life licence since 1979 have been convicted of a further killing. Seven were convicted of murder on the second occasion and two of manslaughter. Another murderer released on life licence committed suicide while awaiting trial for a second murder.

In the cases of the seven double murderers, there were four where none of the victims were related to the offender. In one case, the victims of the first and second murders were members of the offender's family, his wife and sister respectively. In one case, the victim of the first murder was the father of the offender. In the remaining case, the victim of the second murder was the female partner of the offender.

The two released murderers convicted of manslaughter killed people unrelated to them.

Circus Animals

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek a report into the transportation and general treatment of circus animals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Circus animals are protected against unnecessary suffering by the Protection of Animals Act 1911, and by the Welfare of Animals During Transport Order 1992 and other legislation governing the importation and transport of animals. Additionally, the Performing Animals (Regulation) Act 1925 provides for the registration of trainers and the inspection of premises by local authorities. I have received no evidence to suggest that these provisions provide inadequate safeguards for circus animals.

Physical Restraints

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the prisons in England and Wales at which physical restraints have been used on *(a)* men and *(b)* women inmates and the number of times such restraints were used in each establishment during 1993.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 29 April 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question asking if he will list the prisons in England and Wales at which physical restraints have been used on *(a)* men and *(b)* women inmates and the number of times such restraints were used in each establishment during 1993.

The number of applications of restraints under Rule 46 of the Prison Rules 1964 and Rule 49 of the Young Offender Institution Rules 1988 are given in the attached table.

The figures do not cover the use of restraints whilst prisoners are being escorted between Prison Service establishments, or between cells or to the governor's office within an establishment.

Restraints[1] applied to violent or refractory inmates of Prison Service establishments in England and Wales
By establishment, 1993[2]

Establishment and type	*Number of applications*	
	Male	*Female*
Local prisons/remand centres		
Bristol	4	—
Dorchester	1	—
Highdown	3	—
Holme House	1	—
Hull	6	—
Lincoln	3	—
Liverpool	13	—
Pentonville	10	—
Portland	6	—
Preston	1	—
Reading	1	—
Rochester	2	—
Shrewsbury	2	—
Swansea	1	—
Woodhill	6	—
Wormwood Scrubs	5	—
Training prisons		
Acklington	4	—
Camp Hill	1	—
Cookham Wood	—	1
Downview	1	—
Elmley	2	—
Featherstone	2	—
Full Sutton	4	—
Garth	1	—
Highpoint	2	—
Long Lartin	2	—
Maidstone	4	—
Norwich	2	—
Nottingham	1	—
Risley	1	—
Shepton Mallet	1	—
Swaleside	5	—
Wakefield	1	—
Wayland	2	—
Whitemoor	3	—
Winchester	3	—
Closed YOI		
Feltham	2	—
Wetherby	1	—
TOTAL	110	1

[1] Loose canvas jacket, body belt, handcuffs, ankle straps and leather wrist straps.
[2] Provisional figures.

Prison Deaths

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all deaths that have occurred in 1992 and, if available, in 1993, of persons detained in prison department establishments, stating in each case the age and sex of the inmates and cause of death, the inquest verdict, whether the inmate was sentenced or on remand, the establishment where the inmate was detained, whether death occurred there or in an outside hospital and, where the death occurred within the prison, whether the inmate was segregated either in the hospital wing or in the punishment block.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Harry Cohen, dated 29 April 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about deaths in Prison Service custody in England and Wales.

Some of the information which you have requested is not held centrally and could not be obtained except at a disproportionate cost. The information that is available on self inflicted deaths in 1992 and 1993 is set out in the table. In each case the cause of death was hanging. We are also gathering together information on other deaths, including those from natural causes. I shall let you have this information as soon as it is available and also arrange for it to be published in the Official Report.

Self inflicted deaths 1992-93

Age	Sex	Verdict	Sentence	Establishment
1992				
30	Male	Killed self	Sentenced	Hull
40	Male	Suicide	Remand	Bristol
34	Male	Open	Sentenced	Dorchester
21	Male	Suicide	Remand	Durham
18	Male	Open	Remand	Feltham
20	Male	Suicide	Remand	Glen Parva
36	Male	Open	Remand	Pentonville
20	Male	Suicide	Remand	Feltham
25	Male	Killed self	Remand	Pentonville
24	Male	Killed self	Sentenced	Norwich
23	Male	Open	Sentenced	Stafford
38	Male	Killed self	Sentenced	Wakefield
16	Male	Suicide	Sentenced	Deerbolt
22	Male	Suicide	Remand	Liverpool
33	Male	Suicide	Remand	Pentonville
23	Male	Killed self	Remand	Hull
21	Male	Accident	Remand	Leeds
23	Male	Misadventure	Remand	Lewes
30	Male	Misadventure	Sentenced	Swaleside
20	Female	Misadventure	Sentenced	Styal
24	Male	Killed self	Remand	Birmingham
19	Male	Open	Remand	Brinsford
47	Male	Suicide	Sentenced	Wellingboro'
21	Male	Suicide	Sentenced	Ashwell
18	Male	Suicide	Sentenced	Hindley
40	Male	Suicide	Remand	Elmley
30	Female	Misadventure	Sentenced	Holloway
21	Male	Misadventure	Remand	Pentonville
37	Male	Suicide	Sentenced	Maidstone
32	Male	Suicide	Sentenced	Norwich
25	Male	Suicide	Convicted but unsentenced	Durham
51	Male	Suicide	Sentenced	Gartree
43	Male	Open	Sentenced	Parkhurst
30	Male	Suicide	Sentenced	Ashwell
25	Male	Suicide	Sentenced	Long Lartin
22	Male	Killed self	Remand	Leeds
28	Male	Suicide	Remand	Leicester
27	Male	Suicide	Remand	Brixton
21	Male	Open	Sentenced	Littlehey
41	Male	Open	Remand	Wormwood Scrubs
28	Male	Suicide	Remand	Bullingdon
1993				
27	Male	Open	Remand	Highdown
26	Male	Suicide	Remand	Leicester
36	Male	Suicide	Remand	Canterbury
37	Male	Suicide	Sentenced	Durham
20	Male	Suicide	Sentenced	Wetherby
41	Male	Suicide	Sentenced	Hull
26	Male	Open	Convicted but unsentenced	Winchester
27	Male	Open	Convicted but unsentenced	Brixton
19	Male	Open	Sentenced	Hindley
23	Male	Suicide	Remand	Manchester
26	Male	Suicide	Remand	Leicester
43	Male	Suicide	Remand	Leeds
24	Male	Suicide	Convicted but unsentenced	Lindholme
37	Male	Suicide	Sentenced	Bristol
48	Male	Suicide	Remand	Wakefield
29	Male	Misadventure	Sentenced	Exeter
25	Male	Suicide	Remand	Belmarsh
25	Male	Suicide	Sentenced	Leicester
23	Male	Suicide	Convicted but unsentenced	Leeds
36	Male	Inquest verdict pending	Sentenced	Full Sutton
26	Male	Open	Sentenced	Parkhurst
24	Male	Suicide	Sentenced	Wakefield
56	Male	Suicide	Remand	Lincoln
26	Male	Suicide	Remand	Liverpool
51	Male	Suicide	Sentenced	Lincoln
34	Male	Suicide	Remand	Lincoln
39	Male	Inquest verdict pending	Remand	Manchester
44	Female	Inquest verdict pending	Remand	Holloway
37	Male	Suicide	Sentenced	Shepton Mallet
17	Male	Open	Remand	Exeter
41	Male	Suicide	Remand	Exeter
33	Male	Suicide	Remand	Woodhill
38	Male	Suicide	Sentenced	Nottingham
43	Male	Inquest verdict pending	Sentenced	Wakefield
23	Male	Suicide	Sentenced	Long Lartin
25	Male	Inquest verdict pending	Sentenced	Holme House
22	Male	Suicide	Remand	Exeter
26	Male	Suicide	Remand	Norwich
29	Male	Open	Remand	Bristol
33	Male	Suicide	Remand	Norwich
25	Male	Suicide	Convicted but unsentenced	Wandsworth
28	Male	Suicide	Sentenced	Wandsworth
31	Male	Suicide	Sentenced	Dartmoor
34	Male	Inquest verdict pending	Remand	Liverpool
37	Male	Suicide	Remand	Lewes
28	Male	Inquest verdict pending	Sentenced	Holme House
21	Male	Inquest verdict pending	Remand	Wolds

1992 total – 41
1993 total – 47

Firearm Certificates

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to raise the fee for firearms and shotgun certificates.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The fees for the grant and renewal of firearm and shotgun certificates are currently under review. In reviewing fee levels we are taking into account the 1991 report of the Home Office working group

on the administration of the firearms licensing system. This identified models of best practice for police forces in administering the licensing system. The result of the subsequent costing exercise, undertaken by the consultants Ernst and Young, will also be taken into account.

An announcement will be made as soon as possible.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will construct a table showing the cost in each police force area of issuing a firearms or shotgun certificate.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This information is not available.

Detainees

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to ensure that the treatment of detainees is not in breach of any convention which has been ratified by the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Government are committed to their obligations under the 1951 United Nations convention relating to the status of refugees, and the protocol to that convention, and are satisfied that United Kingdom legislation and practice do not breach these or other relevant international obligations.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of applicants for asylum in each month of 1993; and what proportion was refused in each case.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information for 1993 on the number of applications received for asylum in the United Kingdom and decisions made, is given in the table.

Applications[1] received for asylum in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, and decisions[1,2] 1993
Number of principal applicants and proportion of decisions (Per cent.)

			Decisions					
	Applications for asylum	*Total decisions*	*Recognised as a refugee and granted asylum[3]*	*Per cent.*	*Not recognised as a refugee but granted exceptional leave*	*Per cent.*	*Refused asylum and exceptional leave[4]*	*Per cent.*
1993								
January	1,960	3,760	90	2	2,250	60	1,420	38
February	2,180	5,240	225	4	3,420	65	1,595	30
March	1,765	3,085	420	14	1,615	52	1,050	34
April	1,820	2,305	290	13	1,150	50	860	37
May	1,865	2,045	145	7	1,150	56	750	37
June	1,850	1,150	105	9	490	43	550	48
July	1,995	1,065	65	6	260	24	745	70
August	1,295	685	40	6	130	19	520	76
September	1,990	905	55	7	145	18	605	75
October	1,600	885	50	6	190	21	650	73
November	1,805	1,245	55	5	210	17	975	78
December	2,245	1,125	45	4	120	11	965	86

[1] Figures are rounded to the nearest 5.
[2] Decisions do not necessarily relate to applications made in the same period.
[3] Excludes South East Asian refugees.
[4] Figures comprise: those refused after full consideration, those refused on safe third country grounds, and those refused under para. 180F (para 101 prior to 26 July 1993) of the Immigration Rules for failure to provide evidence to support the asylum claim within a reasonable period, including failure to respond to invitation to interview to establish identity.

Police Cells, Manchester

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list total numbers of convicted and remand prisoners held in police cells in Greater Manchester since 1 January; and how much they have cost.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Andrew Bennett, dated 29 April 1994.

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the numbers of prisoners held in police cells in Greater Manchester since 1 January and the costs involved.

A sub-division into convicted and remands is not available centrally for the earlier part of the period from 1 January 1994. However, the total numbers of prisoners held in police cells in the Greater Manchester police area on each date from 1 January 1994 to 26 April 1994 are available and are set out in the attached table.

A total of £21,633 has been paid to Greater Manchester Police Authority. Further invoices, totalling some £488,000, have recently been received and are under consideration.

Date	*Number*
1 January 1994	0
2 January 1994	0
3 January 1994	3
4 to 23 January 1994	0
24 January 1994	2
25 January 1994	0
26 January 1994	0
27 January 1994	2
28 January 1994	0
29 January 1994	0
30 January 1994	0
31 January 1994	9
1 February 1994	37
2 February 1994	27
3 February 1994	37
4 February 1994	35
5 February 1994	38
6 February 1994	38
7 February 1994	39
8 February 1994	69
9 February 1994	61
10 February 1994	76
11 February 1994	92

Date	Number
12 February 1994	92
13 February 1994	92
14 February 1994	108
15 February 1994	134
16 February 1994	174
17 February 1994	179
18 February 1994	202
19 February 1994	208
20 February 1994	154
21 February 1994	185
22 February 1994	195
23 February 1994	185
24 February 1994	195
25 February 1994	182
26 February 1994	194
27 February 1994	166
28 February 1994	171
1 March 1994	196
2 March 1994	207
3 March 1994	225
4 March 1994	203
5 March 1994	197
6 March 1994	196
7 March 1994	180
8 March 1994	169
9 March 1994	165
10 March 1994	189
11 March 1994	175
12 March 1994	188
13 March 1994	188
14 March 1994	190
15 March 1994	225
16 March 1994	221
17 March 1994	248
18 March 1994	226
19 March 1994	233
20 March 1994	233
21 March 1994	197
22 March 1994	201
23 March 1994	197
24 March 1994	199
25 March 1994	183
26 March 1994	187
27 March 1994	187
28 March 1994	180
29 March 1994	184
30 March 1994	170
31 March 1994	166
1 April 1994	166
2 April 1994	159
3 April 1994	159
4 April 1994	197
5 April 1994	177
6 April 1994	155
7 April 1994	163
8 April 1994	163
9 April 1994	165
10 April 1994	165
11 April 1994	198
12 April 1994	204
13 April 1994	185
14 April 1994	168
15 April 1994	139
16 April 1994	139
17 April 1994	140
18 April 1994	123
19 April 1994	129
20 April 1994	121
21 April 1994	109
22 April 1994	110
23 April 1994	119
24 April 1994	119
25 April 1994	141
26 April 1994	134

Iraqi Business Men

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visas have been granted to Iraqi business men in each month since the conclusion of the Gulf war.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have been asked to reply.

I regret that the information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Statistics of visas granted are recorded on the basis of the categories of visas issued at each post and not by the nationality of the applicant. In addition, visiting business men are granted a "visit" visa. There are no sub-divisions within this category.

Diver Mist

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department to what extent the principle of police primacy was maintained throughout exercise Diver Mist.

Mr. Hanley: I have been asked to reply.

The principle that the police co-ordinate the activities of all those responding at and around the scene, as described in the Home Office publication "Dealing with Disaster", was maintained in full throughout exercise Diver Mist.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Plugs and Sockets

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will be discussing with his European partners the implications of the EC proposals to harmonise the plugs and sockets of electrical appliances throughout the EC.

Mr. Heseltine: There is no such proposal. If one were to be put forward we would consider it.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the dangers there are for United Kingdom consumers in any transitional period from the harmonisation of electric plugs and sockets; and what steps he is taking to ensure that the safety of consumers in the United Kingdom is not compromised.

Mr. Heseltine: CENELEC—the European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardisation—the relevant standards-making body, has not published a standard for a harmonised European plug and socket system against which an accurate assessment could be made. In considering whether any change to our present standards might be desirable at some future date, full account will be taken of consumer safety issues. There is no EC proposal for harmonisation.

Industry Council Meeting

Mr. Amess: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the outcome of the meeting of the EC Industry Council held in Luxembourg on 22 April.

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the Industry Council meeting in Luxembourg held on Friday 22 April.

Mr. Sainsbury: The main item on the agenda of the Industry Council held on 22 April was steel. Commissioner Van Miert gave an interim report, in advance of the full report expected on 1 May, on monitoring of the conditions attaching to the six state aid cases agreed by the Council last December—Ilva, Ekostahl, Preital, Siderurgia Nacional, CSI and Sidenor. I was supported by several other member states in underlining the importance the United Kingdom attaches to rigorous monitoring to ensure that the conditions agreed by the December Council are met.

Commissioner Bangemann gave a report on progress towards restructuring of the EC steel industry. There was agreement to prolong until the autumn the support measures—which include enhanced European Coal and Steel Community social aid, market monitoring, a more liberal approach to mergers and joint ventures, and external measures—agreed in February last year. I suggested additional references in the conclusions agreed by the Council to the importance of monitoring of the steel state aid cases and these were accepted.

The Council reached a satisfactory agreement to reduce steadily ECSC lending activities in the run-up to the expiry of the treaty of Paris in 2002. Importantly, it also ensures progress towards phasing out of the ECSC levy before 2002. The agreement by the Council allowed certain loan applications, which have been blocked pending resolution of this issue, to be approved.

There was a wide-ranging debate on industrial competitiveness in the context of the follow-up to the Delors White Paper on growth, competitiveness and employment published last December. I underlined the importance of increased labour market flexibility and reduced labour costs as a means of improving competitiveness, as well as the need to minimise the burden of regulation on business.

The Council agreed conclusions on the textile and clothing industries and a resolution on the automobile industry.

Commissioner Vanni d'Archirafi presented an outline of an integrated programme for small and medium-sized enterprises which sets out areas for joint action with member states and a two-pronged Community contribution relating to improving the environment for SMEs, and some support measures. I reminded the Commission that the main responsibility for SME policy lies with member states but I undertook to consider the proposals when they are spelt out in greater detail. I was able to welcome the importance the Commission was now attaching to deregulation.

To end the Council there was a brief discussion of the Commission's annual report on competition. No votes were taken.

Laboratories

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether operational budgets and targets have been agreed for *(a)* AEA Technology, *(b)* the national environmental technology centre, *(c)* the national physical laboratory, *(d)* the Laboratory of the Government Chemist and *(e)* the national engineering laboratory for 1994-95; and how those budgets and targets have changed from those for 1993-94.

Mr. Heseltine: AEA Technology and the national environmental technology centre are part of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority: they are not set separate budgets and targets by my Department. The UKAEA has been set a negative external financing limit of £8·8 million for 1994-95. Other financial targets have yet to be set. In 1993-94, the UKAEA was set a negative external financing limit of £2·1 million; it was also set a 12·1 per cent. average annual return on net assets employed. Its internal budgets are commercially sensitive and are not published.

In the light of the restructuring of the national physical laboratory, the Laboratory of the Government Chemist and the national engineering laboratory to match the downturn in forecast work load, the laboratories' budgets and targets for 1994-95 are still being finalised. A comparison with the budgets and targets that were set for 1993-94 cannot therefore be provided.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he proposes to implement his consultants' recommendation that an overall steering committee and project manager should be appointed for the DTI laboratories.

Mr. Heseltine: Yes.

Government Chemist

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether primary legislation would be required to fully privatise the laboratory of the Government Chemist; and in what form the post of the Government Chemist would survive after privatisation.

Mr. Heseltine: No primary legislation is required to privatise LGC. The post of Government Chemist will continue.

Contracts

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many responses he received to his consultation document on the directive on unfair terms in contracts; and when he proposes to finalise his conclusions, and place legislation before Parliament.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have received 89 such responses. It is intended to lay regulations implementing the EC Directive on Unfair Contract Terms in Consumer Contracts before Parliament in time for them to enter into force, subject to parliamentary approval, by 31 December 1994.

Industry Awards

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the total number of applications, the number of successful projects, the number of participating companies and the total sum committed in *(a)* SMART and *(b)* SPUR awards; and if he will provide a regional breakdown.

Mr. McLoughlin: The number of applications, the number of successful projects and the sum committed between 1 April 1993 and 31 March 1994 under the small firms merit award for research and technology—SMART—and support for products under research—SPUR—schemes are shown in the tables. Both schemes offer support to single businesses and the number of successful projects is the number of participating companies.

SMART
Small Firms Merit Award for Research and Technology

Region/Office	Applications	Successful Projects	Sum Committed (£ million)
East	180	28	1·32
East Midlands	118	26	1·28
North East	72	9	0·39
North West	175	27	1·27
South East	443	61	2·99
South West	178	33	1·57
West Midlands	145	28	1·31
Yorkshire/Humberside	116	25	1·20
Welsh Office	107	24	1·14
Scottish Office	150	32	1·57
Northern Ireland Office	37	9	0·45
TOTAL	1,721	302	14·49

SPUR
Support for Products Under Research

Region/Office	Applications	Successful Projects	Sum Committed (£ million)
East	8	13	1·25
East Midlands	9	8	0·92
North East	10	6	0·49
North West	30	17	1·19
South East	28	24	2·30
South West	24	16	1·24
West Midlands	20	18	0·80
Yorkshire/Humberside	20	19	1·71
Welsh Office	12	8	0·76
Scottish Office	12	8	0·91
TOTAL	173	137	11·57

Note: Some successful projects result from applications in the previous financial year.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 4 March, *Official Report*, columns *891-92*, what was the number of responses and applications to *(a)* the 1994 SMART—small firms merit award for research and technology—scheme and *(b)* the 1994 Queen's awards.

Mr. McLoughlin: I hope to be able to announce shortly the number of responses and applications to the 1994 SMART scheme. For the 1994 Queen's awards there were 10,733 inquiries and 1,682 applications.

Sizewell B

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which of Sir Frank Layfield's recommendations from the Sizewell B inquiry were accepted by the then Department of Energy.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the decision letter of 12 March 1987, a copy of which was placed in the Library of the House.

Package Holidays

Mr. James Hill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will bring forward legislation to allow deposits in excess of 10 per cent. of the actual purchase price to be charged for goods or services only in circumstances where the seller secures those deposits by means of insurance, bonding or by using a trust account, in a similar way to that required for package holidays by the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992, SI 1992, No. 3288, but with improved provision for enforcement.

Mr. McLoughlin: No. Such regulation would be bureaucratic and expensive, and would, through its adverse effect on the cashflow of businesses, be likely to put up prices. This would not be in the long-term interests of the consumer.

Coal Industry

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish the criteria, and procedure of review, to be used to devise the map which will determine the three categories of land use, as specified in the Coal Authority explanatory note.

Mr. Eggar: I intend to make available in due course a draft map of the coalfields indicating the areas in which the terms for access by the coalbed methane industry will be judged. The criteria for delineating the areas will form part of the consultation exercise.

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to harmonise the regulatory framework for seismic testing to identify *(a)* coal deposits and *(b)* coalbed methane.

Mr. Eggar: I have no plans to harmonise the regulations for seismic testing at this stage. It is important that the regulatory framework for each activity reflects the needs of the relevant industry. Seismic testing to identify coalbed methane is subject to the Petroleum (Production) Regulations. Under the regulatory regime for the privatised coal industry, those wishing to explore for coal will require the consent of the owner of the coal, which would in most cases be the Coal Authority, to enter that coal. A draft model Coal Authority exploration licence, which indicates the form it is envisaged that licence will take, has been made available for consultation to all interested parties.

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what commitments those companies which are granted methane drainage licences will be required to fulfil in relation to the commencement of mining the coal.

Mr. Eggar: Methane drainage licences are granted to enable those engaged in mining the coal to drain methane in order to make mines safe. There are no commitments in relation to the commencement of coal mining, as the sole purpose of this licence is safety.

Gas Prices

Mr. Hardy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what date he secured a report from the gas regulator concerning arrangements which may affect the price of gas in certain areas.

Mr. Eggar: The Director General of Gas Supply has no duty to report to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade on gas pricing issues. However, as the President announced on 21 December 1993 the DTI and Ofgas are jointly preparing a consultation paper on the regulation of gas supply after the ending of the statutory monopoly. I expect that this will be published soon.

Eurostat

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what examination he has made of the basis for the figures in the first issue of the Eurostat newsletter "EDICOM/INTRASTAT" for the trade balance between the United Kingdom and France, Germany and Italy shown in the list for the United Kingdom and for each of those countries;

(2) what assessment he has made of recent Eurostat returns in assessing the accuracy of United Kingdom returns of the trade deficit between the United Kingdom and France, Italy and Germany.

Mr. Nelson: I have been asked to reply.

I refer to the answer given by the Paymaster General to the hon. Member on 26 April, 1994 *Official Report*, column *88*.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Royal Palaces

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans there are to close to the public any of the palaces of the Historic Royal Palaces Agency; for what purpose; and for how long.

Mr. Sproat: The 1994-97 corporate plan of the Historic Royal Palaces, which is currently being considered by Ministers, proposes the closure of the state apartments and royal ceremonial dress collection at Kensington palace temporarily for a period of about 18 months, starting no later than autumn 1995, to allow the complete refurbishment, re-presentation and re-interpretation of these parts of the palace, including the updating of fire and security precautions.

Departmental Publications

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage for how many regular publications he was responsible in 1993-94; what was their circulation; and how many were obtainable by subscription.

Mr. Sproat: The Department publishes an annual expenditure plans report, which is a sale publication via Her Majesty's Stationery Office. A short guidebook "A Guide to the Department and its Sponsored Bodies" is updated and distributed free of charge at intervals—circulation 2,500 copies. A number of other annual reports are published each year and the most recent issues of these are:

"Report by the Secretary of State for National Heritage on Library and Information Matters during 1993" (HMSO, HoC 339, £7·10 net).

"Treasure Trove Reviewing Committee Annual Reports 1991-92 and 1992-93".

"Export of Works of Art 1992-93, Thirty-ninth Report of the Reviewing Committee appointed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in December 1952" (HMSO, Cm 2355, £14·45 net).

"Report by the Secretary of State for National Heritage on the Public Lending Right Scheme 1992-93" (HMSO, HoC 61, £7·65 net).

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Commission

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue guidance to the Local Government Commission indicating the evidence he will expect to be put forward in any recommendation for a new unitary local authority of effective arrangements for the provision of personal social services within a new authority and for the co-ordination of such services with health services.

Mr. Curry: Annex B of the Department's policy guidance to the Local Government Commission sets out considerations relevant to a range of local government functions, including personal social services. A copy of the guidance is in the Library.

It is for the Commission to decide what evidence it will submit in support to its recommendations. After receiving the Commission's report on an area it is, however, open to my right hon. Friend to direct the Commission to supply him with additional information.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been written off in total in customer debts in the PSA for the 1992-93 appropriation accounts; and if he will give details of the constituent amounts.

Mr. Curry: The 1992-93 PSA Services appropriation account losses statement included the following abandoned claims:

	£
Milton Keynes Community Transport	37,933·53
Conder Projects	8,407·07

In addition, £4,674,767·59 was charged to subhead D10 of the account, in respect of the unrecoverable works debts owed by non Exchequer customers:

	£
Tate Gallery/Tate in the North	3,276,911·64
Imperial War Museum	761,611·42
Natural History Museum	273,138·76
Miscellaneous other debts individually not exceeding £100,000	363,105·77
	4,674,767·59

Boat Dwellers

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to amend the law in respect of the payment of business rates and council tax by boat dwellers whose boats are moored in boatyards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: None.

Energy Conservation Bill

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mrs. Maddock) of 20 April, *Official Report*, column *531*, how many letters he had received which were opposed to the Energy Conservation Bill.

Mr. Atkins: None.

Council Tax

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average council tax per household for each district in England.

Mr. Curry: I have arranged for this information to be placed in the Library of the House.

Ordnance Survey

Mr. Lord: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what performance targets have been set for the Ordnance Survey executive agency in the year 1994-95.

Mr. Atkins: The following performance targets have been set for Ordnance Survey in 1994-95.

1. Recover at least 75 per cent. of the total costs incurred by the Agency.
2. Complete and make available to customers the initial digital conversion of basic scale mapping for the whole of Great Britain by 31 March 1995.
3. Survey and map at the basic scales 886,000 units of change.
4. Despatch 90 per cent. of Land-Line digital map units within six working days of a valid order being received.
5. Despatch 90 per cent. of small scale maps within five working days of a valid order being received.
6. Operate a telephone help line service for customers between 8.30 am and 5.00 pm on working days, a 10 second response time within these hours, and a telephone answering service at all other times.

These targets require a number of challenging improvements over good performance in previous years.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Sleeping Drugs

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what restrictions are in place on advertising drugs available without prescriptioin which are designed to aid sleep; what checks are carried out to ensure that addictive or potentially harmful drugs are not advertised for mass consumption; what health warnings should be given in such advertisements; in what ways regulations or guidelines on the advertisement of such drugs have been amended or relaxed within the past five years; what plans he has to introduce new legislation, statutory orders or guidelines to regulate the promotion of aids to sleep which are available without prescription; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: Licensed medicines may be advertised only under the stringent controls of the Medicines Act 1968 and supporting regulations. These ensure that the advertising is in accordance with the product licence and is not misleading. Products which are available without prescription may be advertised to the public, in compliance with the Medicines (Labelling and Advertising to the Public) Regulations 1978. These regulations prohibit the advertising of a treatment for sleeplessness of insomnia. Advertising for the relief of temporary sleeplessness is permitted.

Medicines which are considered to be addictive or potentially harmful when used without medical supervision are available only on prescription and may not be advertised to the public. Proposed legislation to amend the 1978 regulations in order to implement Council directive 92/28/EEC is currently under consideration.

Agriculture

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will extend the time for claims to be submitted to the agricultural development operational programme to the end of 1994; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The Commission has ruled that financial support under the Northern Ireland agricultural development operational programme will be limited to payments made to farmers by 31 December 1994. In order to comply with this condition it was necessary for the Department to require all claims for grant to be submitted by 30 June 1994 so as to allow sufficient time for claims to be verified and payments issued to farmers by 31 December.

Because of the need to ensure that all payments are made by 31 December 1994 it is not possible to extend the time for claims to be submitted.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Agency

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total salary of the CSA chief executive in 1993-94; which part of that figure relates to performance; and what is the maximum payment possible under the performance payment part of the salary agreement.

Mr. Burt: The current basic salary of the Child Support Agency chief executive is £48,520 plus London weighting of £1,776. Details of the total remuneration, including any performance bonus, will appear in the agency's annual report for 1993-94. However it is not the policy of the Department to give details of chief executive performance pay arrangements.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest estimate of the total sum collected by the Child Support Agency in maintenance payments in the first year of operation; and of this, what sum went to parents with care and their children and how much to the Treasury via reduced benefit payments.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Donald Dewar, dated 28 April 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the latest estimate of the total sum collected by the Child Support Agency in maintenance payments in the first year of the Agency's operations.

To the end of February 1994, £186 million had been collected. This includes £155 million paid direct from absent parents to parents with care, which has offset benefit spending, and £31 million paid through the Agency's collection service. Of the latter figure, £1·8 million has been passed on to parents with care, and £24·4 million has offset benefit spending. The balance remained in the Agency's account awaiting allocation.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) in how many cases in which the absent parent had not been paying maintenance at the time the inquiry form was issued by the Child Support Agency a maintenance assessment had been finalised at the latest date for which figures are available; and what percentage that is of the total number of cases where the absent parent was not paying maintenance when the inquiry form was issued;

(2) in how many cases where an inquiry form has been issued by the Child Support Agency to an absent parent the parent concerned was not paying maintenance on a regular basis at the time the form was issued; and what percentage that represents of all cases in which an inquiry form has been issued at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Donald Dewar, dated 28 April 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the total number of maintenance payments made to the Child Support Agency.

At 28 February 1994, 420,600 absent parents had been issued with maintenance enquiry forms and 188,600 maintenance assessments had been completed. Although the Agency does not keep detailed figures on the proportion of these cases in which maintenance was not already being paid, we estimate that some 60 per cent. of cases taken on during this period were cases where maintenance was not previously in payment.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the housing benefit management information system annual 1 per cent. sample was last updated; what plans he has to update those data; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: The data contained in the annual one per cent. sample are regularly reviewed to reflect changes to existing policies or the introduction of new benefits. It is expected that the data contained in the May 1993 sample will be available this summer.

Income Support

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the circumstances in which a deduction from income support can be made by the Benefits Agency, in the order in which they rank for payment, and the total deduction that can be made as a percentage of the total income support payment.

Mr. Burt: Payments may be made direct from income support to certain third party creditors in the circumstances specified in schedules 9 and 9A to the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations 1987, SI No. 1968. Also, deduction may be made for payment of unpaid community charge, council tax and fines and recovery of overpayments of benefit under the appropriate regulatory provisions—SI Nos. 507/1989 and 545/1990, 494/1993, 2182/1993 and 664/1988 respectively. Social fund loans are also recoverable by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, through deductions from income support. The rules governing limits on deductions and the priority order for deductions are contained in paragraphs 8 and 9 of schedule 9.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many recipients of income support in England, Scotland, Wales and Britain there are; and what percentage of the total had deductions made from benefit for social fund repayments and fuel bills in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the table.

	Number of cases	*Percentage*
England		
Deductions for fuel	185,000	4·3
Deductions for Social Fund repayment	458,000	10·7
Deductions for fuel and Social Fund	84,000	2·0
Number of Income Support recipients	4,282,000	100·0
Wales		
Deductions for fuel	17,000	5·9
Deductions for Social Fund repayment	34,000	11·9
Deductions for fuel and Social Fund	8,000	2·8
Number of Income Support recipients	287,000	100·0
Scotland		
Deductions for fuel	42,000	8·1
Deductions for Social Fund repayment	94,000	18·1
Deductions for fuel and Social Fund	22,000	4·2
Number of Income Support recipients	519,000	100·0
Great Britain		
Deductions for fuel	243,000	4·8
Deductions for Social Fund repayment	586,000	11·5
Deductions for fuel and Social Fund	114,000	2·2
Number of Income Support recipients	5,088,000	100·0

Source: Income Support Statistics Annual Enquiry, May 1992.

Notes:

1. The figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand, percentages are correct to one decimal place.
2. Fuel costs include payments for gas and/or electricity. Deductions may be for current charges only or may include the standard amount in respect of arrears.
3. There will be a degree of overlap in the deductions figures in that people with deductions for fuel costs may also have a deduction for repayment of a social fund loan. Numbers with fuel cost deductions and those with social fund repayment deductions do not therefore exactly total.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many parliamentary questions, in the period November 1992 to March 1993, were answered with the response that the information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost; and how many were referred on to an agency chief executive.

Mr. Hague: In the stipulated five-month period a total of 1,183 questions were asked of this Department. The POLIS database in the Library has identified 65 questions

as not answered on the grounds of disproportionate cost or because the information was not held centrally. Agency chief executives replied to 150 questions.

Severe Hardship Unit, Glasgow

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what training has been provided for local staff in handling the problems associated with 16 and 17-year-old applicants following the closure of the severe hardship unit in Glasgow; and what other additional resources have been made available to assist staff to deal with the changes which result;

(2) what savings he expects to accrue to his Department as a result of the closure of the severe hardship unit in Glasgow.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Mike Watson, dated 28 April 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions concerning suggestions that the Severe Hardship Claims Unit (SHCU) in Glasgow is being closed. The SHCU unit is not being closed, but there is to be a change in emphasis away from the SHCU to the Benefits Agency (BA) Districts.

Following the comments in the 8th Report of the Social Security Advisory Committee, recommendations were made about the claims procedures for discretionary awards for 16/17 year old customers. As a result, from the 4 April 1994 decisions on the majority of these claims will be made by locally based BA staff, rather than by contacting the SHCU. The SHCU will, however, be required to make decisions on the more complex cases and those where the District Office feel that a severe hardship payment should not be made.

Before the process of devolving this work commenced, training for the handling of this type of claim was revised. All staff authorised to make decisions about the award of benefit to 16/17 year old customers must complete the new training package before they can carry out these duties. To ensure that all staff are fully trained the SHCU is providing a complete service to all offices until 2 May 1994. In addition, further guidance is available in the form of a Handbook, "Income Support for 16/17 year olds" which has been recently revised and updated. The revised Handbook was issued to all of the BA's District Offices in March 1994 and a copy of it has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

There will be no increase in the workload for locally based BA staff, but in fact a small administrative saving, calculated to be 10 staff years. Instead of having to contact the SHCU in Glasgow, staff will make decisions locally immediately following an interview, thereby leading to an improved service for 16/17 year olds.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Contributions Agency

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will publish the revised framework document for the Contributions Agency.

Mr. Hague: The Contributions Agency's revised framework document has been published today. Copies have been placed in the Library.

WALES

Forestry Commission Land

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what is the programme for the disposal of Forestry Commission land in Wales from 1 April 1989 to 31 March 2000;

(2) if he will make it his policy not to allow the disposal programme of Forestry Commission land in Wales to be increased without his permission.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In the five years from 1 April 1989 to 31 March 1994 the Forestry Commission sold some 5,500 hectares of forest land in Wales and currently expects to sell about a further 9,000 hectares by the year 2000. Ministers asked the commission to dispose of 100,000 hectares of forest land in Great Britain between 1989 and the end of the century. The commission is responsible for selecting properties for sale in accordance with criteria laid down by Ministers. Any change to the overall disposals programme would be subject to the agreement of my right hon. Friend.

Consultants

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the cost of Touche Ross consultancy exercise, which included the questionnaire sent out on 1 February to all school governors in Wales; if Touche Ross were awarded the contract as a result of competitive tender; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Details of the survey's costs were provided in my reply to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 17 February 1994 at column 947. Touche Ross Management Consultants was appointed to carry out the survey following a tendering exercise in accordance with standard procedures.

Grant-maintained Schools (Promotion)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the cost of the recent conference held in the Copthorne hotel, Calverhouse Cross, to promote grant-maintained schools in Cardiff and the Vale.

Mr. Redwood: The total cost of the three conferences on grant-maintained status held last year was £46,210. It is not possible to identify separately within this figure the costs incurred in relation to the conference held in Cardiff.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* part-time and *(b)* full-time jobs were created in Wales in 1993 in (i) the manufacturing industry, (ii) the service industry and (iii) all industries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 27 April 1994]:* Comprehensive information on the number of jobs created is not available. According to the Employment Department's latest quarterly estimates series the change in the number of employees in employment is shown in the following table.

Change in number of employees in employment, December 1992-December 1993: Wales

	Part-time	Full-time
Manufacturing industry	-1,100	+10,600
Service industry	+2,500	+1,900
All industries	+1,400	+5,300

Source: NOMIS.

SCOTLAND

Land Grants

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the amounts *(a)* applied for and *(b)* received by the Scottish Office from the European Community for land grants relating to industrial regional aid and the amounts paid to Scottish applicants for land grants for each year since 1975.

Mr. Stewart: The Scottish Office does not itself undertake land renewal work. Local authorities and local enterprise companies do, however, carry out and assist with land renewal. Such activities are normally eligible to compete for European regional development fund grant if the work is carried out in an area designated under the European structural funds. Detailed records of projects are not kept centrally either for applications or grant received but it is considered that such work would form only a small part of any programme.

Education Statistics

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of those aged 16 to 18 years in Scotland are in full-time education; and how many are in each educational sector.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The latest available information is in respect of 1992.

16 to 18-year-olds in full-time education in Scotland, January 1992[1]

	Number (thousands)	Percentage of population in age group
All full-time education	82·3	41
of which		
School	40·7	20
Vocational further education	16·9	9
Higher education	24·7	12

[1] Age as at 31 August 1991.

Jobs

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the percentage of new jobs likely to be created by the end of the decade that will be jobs traditionally carried out by women.

Mr. Stewart: Information in the form requested is not available.

Playgrounds and Playing Fields

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many schools in Scotland have sold playgrounds and playing fields since restrictions were lifted.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information is not recorded centrally on disposals by local authorities of school playgrounds and school playing fields or other land and buildings held for educational purposes. There has been no recent change in the statutory requirements governing the provision to be made for school playgrounds and school playing fields in Scotland set out in the School Premises (General Requirements and Standards) (Scotland) Regulations 1967.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of the income in 1994-95 for each district council in Scotland comes directly from *(a)* central Government sources, *(b)* council tax and *(c)* other sources.

Mr. Stewart: Information about local authority income from "other sources" is not held centrally. The figures for aggregate external finance—AEF—and income from the council tax are given in the table.

	AEF per cent.	Council tax per cent.
Borders	87·2	12·8
Central	85·1	14·9
Dumfries and Galloway	87·1	12·9
Fife	84·9	15·1
Grampian	85·3	14·7
Highland	88·0	12·0
Lothian	81·5	18·5
Strathclyde	87·9	12·1
Tayside	85·2	14·8

Note:

1. AEF support includes Revenue Support Grant, Distributable amount of NDRI and Specific Grants (except Urban Programme specific grant, figures for which are not readily available).

2. Council Tax is inclusive of amounts of Council Tax Benefit met by grant from the Department of Social Security.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much Government grant per head of population was allocated to each district council in Scotland for 1994-95.

Mr. Stewart: The information is in the table.

	Total AEF per head of population (£)
Berwickshire	119
Bittrick and Lauderdale	115
Roxburgh	126
Tweeddale	121
Clackmannan	146
Falkirk	133
Stirling	168
Annandale and Eskdale	99
Nithsdale	117
Stewartry	102
Wigtown	137
Dunfermline	122
Kirkcaldy	124
North East Fife	129
Aberdeen City	142
Banff and Buchan	122
Gordon	115
Kincardine and Deeside	105
Moray	130
Badenoch and Strathspey	125
Caithness	134

	Total AEF per head of population (£)
Inverness	114
Lochaber	159
Nairn	110
Ross and Cromarty	167
Skye and Lochalsh	201
Sutherland	173
East Lothian	139
Edinburgh City	177
Midlothian	129
West Lothian	139
Argyll and Bute	221
Bearsden and Milngavie	106
Clydebank	168
Clydesdale	140
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	124
Cumnock and Doon Valley	143
Cunninghame	151
Dumbarton	132
East Kilbride	110
Eastwood	82
Glasgow City	232
Hamilton	140
Inverclyde	169
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	129
Kyle and Carrick	131
Monklands	169
Motherwell	152
Renfrew	146
Strathkelvin	124
Angus	118
Dundee City	175
Perth and Kinross	132

Note:

1. AEF support includes Revenue Support Grant and Specific Grants (except Urban Programme specific grant, figures for which are not readily available). Non-domestic rate income is not distributed to district councils.
2. AEF per head of population calculated using the Register General for Scotland's 1992 mid-year estimates of total population.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of the income for 1994-95 of each regional council in Scotland comes directly from *(a)* central Government sources, *(b)* council tax and *(c)* other sources.

Mr. Stewart: Information about local authority income from "other sources" is not held centrally. The figures for aggregate external finance—AEF—and income from the council tax are given in the table.

	AEF per cent.	Council tax per cent.
Berwickshire	83·5	16·5
Ettrick and Lauderdale	75·9	24·1
Roxburgh	78·8	21·2
Tweeddale	77·6	22·4
Clackmannan	73·7	26·3
Falkirk	82·7	17·3
Stirling	77·2	22·8
Annandale and Eskdale	70·5	29·5
Nithsdale	72·9	27·1
Stewartry	78·5	21·5
Wigtown	76·7	23·3
Dunfermline	76·7	23·3
Kirkcaldy	71·9	28·1
North East Fife	69·2	30·8
Aberdeen City	68·8	31·2
Banff and Buchan	80·8	19·2
Gordon	77·4	22·6
Kincardine and Deeside	82·1	17·9
Moray	80·5	19·5
Badenoch and Strathspey	75·3	24·7
Caithness	84·8	15·2
Inverness	74·8	25·2
Lochaber	75·8	24·2
Nairn	73·2	26·8
Ross and Cromarty	77·5	22·5
Skye and Lochalsh	83·7	16·3
Sutherland	82·2	17·8
East Lothian	74·4	25·6
Edinburgh City	65·0	35·0
Midlothian	72·9	27·1
West Lothian	83·8	16·2
Argyll and Bute	76·6	23·4
Bearsden and Milngavie	65·0	35·0
Clydebank	76·8	23·2
Clydesdale	71·1	28·9
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	71·4	28·6
Cumnock and Doon Valley	76·1	23·9
Cunninghame	75·5	24·5
Dumbarton	66·6	33·4
East Kilbride	66·7	33·3
Eastwood	64·9	35·1
Glasgow City	77·8	22·2
Hamilton	69·8	30·2
Inverclyde	78·4	21·6
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	73·6	26·4
Kyle and Carrick	63·3	36·7
Monklands	74·7	25·3
Motherwell	77·0	23·0
Renfrew	71·6	28·4
Strathkelvin	62·4	37·6
Angus	79·3	20·7
Dundee City	72·3	27·7
Perth and Kinross	76·3	23·7

Notes:

1. AEF support includes revenue support grant and specific grants (except urban programme specific grant, figures for which are not readily available). Non-domestic rate income is not distributed to district councils.
2. AEF per head of population calculated using the register general for Scotland's 1992 mid-year estimates of total population.

Labour Statistics

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of *(a)* the total work force and *(b)* working women are in the service sector.

Mr. Stewart: For December 1993, the latest date for which information is available, it is estimated that 73 per cent. of all employees in employment in Scotland worked in the service sector. The percentage of female employees in employment who work in the service sector is estimated to be 85 per cent.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many women workers there were in 1990 and at the latest date available; and how many of these were in part-time employment.

Mr. Stewart: For December 1990, it is estimated that there were 960,900 female employees in employment in Scotland, of whom 419,700 were in part-time employment. For December 1993, the latest date for which information is available, it is estimated that there were 994,500 female employees in employment of whom 447,800 were in part-time employment.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of average male earnings is earned by women *(a)* manual and *(b)* non-manual workers in the service sector.

Mr. Stewart: Information from the new earnings survey, at April 1993, shows that the average weekly earnings of full-time non-manual women in the service sector is equivalent to 68 per cent. of the average for non-manual men workers in the service sector. The average weekly earnings of full-time manual women workers in the service sector is equivalent to 67 per cent. of the average for manual men workers. These estimates are based on average gross weekly earnings of full-time employees on adult rates in Scotland whose pay was unaffected by absence—source: Employment Department.

Leisure Activities

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what amount was spent in Scotland in 1992 and 1993 on leisure activities for under-16s and those aged 16 to 21.

Sir Hector Monro: The information requested is not held centrally.

School Meals

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will investigate the nutritional standards of schools meals in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We have no plans to do so. It is for education authorities, which are responsible for the administration of the school meal service, to decide the content and standard of school meals.

Government Grant

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much Government grant was allocated per head of population in each regional and islands council in Scotland in 1994-95.

Mr. Stewart: The information is given in the table.

	Total AEF per head of population £
Borders	928
Central	817
Dumfries and Galloway	911
Fife	821
Grampian	786
Highland	1,029
Lothian	778
Strathclyde	883
Tayside	850
Orkney	1,814
Shetland	2,063
Western Isles	2,254

Note:
1. AEF support includes Revenue Support Grant, Distributable amount of NDRI and Specific Grants (except Urban Programme specific grant, figures for which are not readily available).
2. AEF per head of population calculated using the Register General for Scotland's 1992 mid-year estimates of total population.

Historic Scotland

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the key performance targets he has set for Historic Scotland for 1994-95.

Mr. Lang: I have set Historic Scotland the following key performance targets for 1994-95:

	Target
Protecting the built heritage	
i. Number of ancient monuments of national importance to be scheduled.	350
ii. Number of listed building resurvey units to be completed.	150
iii. Number of historic building repair grants accepted	137
iv. Conservation of monuments in care.	reduce maintenance backlog
Promoting and representing the built heritage	
i. Number of visitors to monuments incare.	£2·4 million
ii. Total income.	£7·9 million
Management	
i. Value for money savings on maintenance of monuments in care.	3·5 per cent.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Criminal Cases

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Attorney-General if he will include in the revised code for the Crown prosecutors and in the statement on the treatment of victims and witnesses by the Crown Prosecution Service a section on notification to or consultation with victims or their families where discontinuance of a serious case is contemplated.

The Attorney-General: In general, it is the responsibility of the police to keep victims or their families informed of decisions by which they are affected. This approach is set out in the victims charter and was supported by the Royal Commission on criminal justice which reported last year. If a case is to be discontinued, the CPS will, wherever practicable, consult the police in advance. The CPS seeks to ensure that the police are clear about the reasons for any proposed discontinuance so that information can be passed on to the victim and their respective interests taken into account when deciding whether proceedings would be in the public interest.

A draft of the revised code for Crown prosecutors is currently being considered by interested parties on the criminal justice system including victim support. The director is hoping to publish in the early summer.

The CPS keeps under review its statement on the treatment of victims and witnesses. There will be an opportunity to consider whether it should contain information about the termination of cases when the statement is next revised. The suggestion put forward by my hon. Friend has been drawn to the attention of the director.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Occupied Territories

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress being made in the Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation talks in Cairo, with particular reference to settlements, release of prisoners, security forces and the powers of the Palestinian judiciary.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We understand good progress is being made at the talks in Cairo. Settlements are a final status issue. The Israel-PLO declaration of principles makes it clear that it is to be discussed as soon as possible during the interim period of five years leading to final status, but not later than the beginning of the third year. The interim period starts upon Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho. Israeli negotiators have stated that Israel will release 5,000 of the remaining 8,400 Palestinian prisoners. They have however said that they will not release prisoners who are members of Hamas. Agreement has been reached on a Palestinian police force of 9,000 men for Gaza and Jericho. Judicial issues are still under discussion.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current position of the Israeli Government on withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Prime Minister Rabin has said that any "significant" withdrawal would be dependent upon a referendum in Israel.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Israel's current position on the removal of settlements on the Golan Heights.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Prime Minister Rabin has stated publicly that he would be prepared to evacuate settlements anywhere in the occupied territories if that were necessary for peace.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Palestinian police are scheduled to enter the Gaza strip and Jericho; and what representations he has been making to the Government of Israel to make this date as early as possible.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Palestinian police are due to assume their duties in Gaza and Jericho once an agreement on Israeli withdrawal is signed. We have emphasised to both sides the importance we attach to rapid conclusion of this agreement.

Lin Qi Qun

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 25 April, *Official Report*, column *12*, with regard to correspondence concerning Lin Qi Qun, if he will investigate the state of affairs in his office which has led him to the statement in his answer that his officials have asked for copies following the faxing of such copies to his office three weeks before; if he will take steps to improve procedures in his office following its loss of the original correspondence last December and several reminders sent following that date; and if he will now reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton without further delay.

Mr. Hurd: I have written to the right hon. Member.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid Distribution

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to review the distribution of Government aid to overseas countries and to prevent such aid from being absorbed by officials of recipient countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The possibility of diversion of aid for illicit purposes is considered at all stages in the planning and administration of the aid programme. Most procurement is undertaken by ODA's Overseas Appointments and Contract Department or through registered British procurement agents subject to ODA monitoring, with goods and services generally obtained from United Kingdom sources. Implementation of projects and programmes in the recipient country is, where appropriate, supervised by British consultants or technical co-operation officers on contract to the ODA. Progress at all stages is monitored by ODA advisers, often located in regional offices for more direct and frequent access.

These mechanisms and procedures are continually reviewed to ensure that aid continues to achieve its intended objectives.

Sudan

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what part of the further tranche of £15 million provided for in relief aid to the Horn of Africa will be applied to Sudan; and if he will give details of the work it will support.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We expect to spend about £5 million in Sudan, subject to need and our ability to deliver humanitarian assistance. It is available to support the activities of non-governmental organisations and UN agencies including the provision of shelter for the displaced, drugs, water and supplementary feeding.

Nigeria

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Nigerian Government concerning the current situation of the Ogoni people in Nigeria.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have consistently underlined our wish to see good government and respect for human rights for all the people of Nigeria.

HEALTH

Nurses

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of the current shortfall in national health service nursing staff.

Mr. Sackville: It is for local employers to determine the level of nursing staff they require.

Public Appointments

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the members, occupations and other interests of *(a)* the National Blood Authority and *(b)* the NHS Supplies Authority together with the remuneration expenses, travel, pension and any other allowances or benefits relating to the chair or non-executive membership of each.

Mr. Sackville: The information available will be placed in the Library.

Over-65s

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of NHS funds were spent on those over 65 years in the last year for which figures are available; and what proportion of public health care funds was spent on those over 65 years old in each other country of the EC.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is estimated that around 40 per cent. of gross current expenditure on hospital and community health services in England during 1990-91 was attributable to people aged 65 years and over, who represent approximately 16 per cent. of the population. Figures for other European Community countries are not available centrally.

Paracetamol Overdose

Mr. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of admissions to accident and emergency facilities is caused by paracetamol overdose.

Mr. Sackville: The information is not available for accident and emergency attenders. However, the number of hospital in-patients cases associated with poisoning by paracetamol are recorded in a wider category which also includes poisoning by acentanilide and phenacetin. In 1990-91 there were 30,479 finished consultant episodes where poisoning by these substances was shown as the primary diagnosis.

Prescription Charges (Asthmatics)

Mr. Hoon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what monitoring her Department has undertaken of the affordability of prescription charges for asthmatics;

(2) what representations her Department has received about asthmatics' ability to pay prescription charges.

Dr. Mawhinney: No specific monitoring is undertaken. We periodically receive representations about extending the list of medical conditions which confer exemption from prescription charges to include other illnesses, including asthma. Charge remission available under the national health service low income scheme and prescription pre-payment certificates ensure that no one need be deterred for financial reasons from obtaining necessary medication.

Data Protection

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of general practitioners *(a)* hold computerised records and *(b)* are registered under the Data Protection Act 1984.

Mr. Sackville: According to a survey conducted on behalf of the Department in 1993 an estimated 79 per cent. of general practices possess a computer to hold practice records, of which 90 per cent. use the computer for recording some clinical information about patients. Information about registration under the Data Protection Act is not available centrally.

Contraceptive Services

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many contraceptive claim forms were submitted by general practitioners in each of the last 10 years and in each month of 1993-94.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information about the number of contraceptive claim forms submitted by general practitioners is not available in the form requested.

Press Conferences

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many press conferences she and each Minister in her Department have held in the last six months.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Health Literature Line

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost of the health literature line, including the cost of producing and sending the leaflets, in each year since 1990-91.

Mr. Sackville: The cost for 1993-94 is £263,346. Information on costs for the years 1990-91 to 1992-93 and on producing and sending the leaflets is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

BCG Vaccinations

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 30 March, *Official Report*, columns *890-1*, if she will list the 31 districts which do not offer Bacille-Calmette-Guérin vaccination to neonates.

Mr. Sackville: No. In 1991 the Public Health Laboratory Service's communicable disease surveillance centre carried out a national survey into the policies and practices of district health authorities for BCG immunisation. The information was collected "in confidence" so as to ensure that the results were as complete as possible. Since 1991 the Department of Health has restated its guidance on BCG immunisation and many health authorities have reviewed their policies.

NHS Property (Disposal)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the redundant NHS hospitals that have been disposed of without planning permission since 1987.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) on 31 March at column *1038*.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list the regional health authorities pre-1 April that were obliged to consult the Valuation Office for professional advice on the disposal of national health service property;

(2) under what circumstances regional health authorities should consult, before 1 April, the Valuation Office even though they are untied.

Mr. Sackville: Regional health authorities which were untied from the district valuer, prior to April 1994, are required to secure the recommendation of the district valuer in respect of acquisitions or disposals where, at the outset, the value appeared to be more than £5 million.

Regional health authorities which were not untied as of April 1994 were as follows:

Mersey RHA
West Midlands RHA
North East Thames RHA
North West Thames RHA
South Western RHA

Prescriptions

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 14 April, *Official Report*, column *295*, when she intends to issue guidance to family health services authorities on private prescriptions.

Dr. Mawhinney: Guidance will be issued shortly.

Departmental Policy

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) of 18 April, *Official Report*, column *396*, regarding her plans for the work of her Department, how she intends to strengthen the arrangements for controlling communicable diseases and other health hazards;

(2) pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) of 18 April, *Official Report*, column *396*, regarding her plans for the work of her Department, what new information she will be providing on communicable diseases and other health hazards.

Mr. Sackville: The Government remain committed to preventing communicable diseases and reducing health hazards.

Joint guidance from the Departments of Health and Environment, HSG(93)56 "Public Health Responsibilities of the NHS Roles of Others", was issued on 24 November 1993 to provide firm guidance on communicable disease control arrangements. Copies of the guidance are available in the Library.

A joint Department of Health/Public Health Laboratory Service working group is currently reviewing and extending the guidance issued to the national health service in 1988 about hospital infection control, with the aim of issuing revised guidelines to the NHS in the autumn.

Childhood immunisation uptake rates are now at record levels and the incidence of childhood diseases are at their lowest ever levels. The memorandum "Immunisation against Infectious Disease", which provides guidance on all matters concerning immunisation, is currently being updated and a new edition will be sent to all doctors and other health care professionals involved in immunisation. Details of the plans to introduce the new tetanus/diphtheria booster dose for teenagers will be announced shortly. We recently issued guidance to the health service on "Aids/HIV—Infected Health Care Workers" and "Protecting Health Care Workers and Patients from Hepatitis B Infection". Copies of these publications are available in the Library. We are aware of the concerns about the recent small increase in cases of tuberculosis. We are currently funding a survey by the Public Health Laboratory Service into notification of tuberculosis and recently my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health established an inter-departmental working group to consider all aspects of tuberculosis.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) of 18 April, *Official Report*, column *396*, regarding her plans for the work of her Department, how she plans to implement the open government code of practice throughout her Department.

Mr. Sackville: Two documents on how the code of practice will operate for the Department of Health have been produced: one is a guide to the public, the other is guidance issued to all staff in the Department. Copies of each will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) of 18 April, *Official Report*, column *396*, regarding her plans for the work of her Department, what further developments in the internal market she intends to secure.

Dr. Mawhinney: We propose to secure continued improvements in national health service patient care and choice by strengthening purchasing. We are preparing legislation to enable district health authorities and family health services authorities to merge, completing the move to trust status of providers, promoting fundholding so that all general practitioners who are able and wish to can become fundholders and ensuring that the internal market operates to increase competition between providers for the benefit of patients.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) of 18 April, *Official Report*, column *396*, regarding her plans for the work of her Department, what plans she is making to ensure that amendments are made to the Mental Health Act 1983.

Mr. Bowis: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 2 March at column *264*, with regard to supervised discharge and extended leave. We have also announced our intention to amend the provisions of the Mental Health Act 1983 relating to the return of detained patients who go absent without leave, and are now considering the responses to our consultation paper on this subject.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) of 18 April, *Official Report*, column *396*, regarding her plans for the work of her Department, what timetable she envisages for the establishment of the Medical Devices Directorate as a "next steps" agency.

Mr. Sackville: The matter is currently under consideration. We hope to be able to make an announcement shortly.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) of 18 April, *Official Report*, column *396*, regarding her plans for the work of her Department, what communication strategies she intends to implement; and what budget she has given this priority.

Mr. Sackville: Communications with national health service staff and with other agencies involved in the planning and provision of health and social services is an important and ongoing part of the work of the NHS executive.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) of 18 April, *Official Report*, column *396*, regarding her plans for the work of her Department, what steps she is taking to introduce new adoption legislation.

Mr. Bowis: As stated in the White Paper "Adoption: The Future" the Government will bring forward new adoption legislation as soon as the legislative programme allows.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) of 18 April, *Official Report*, column, *396*, regarding her plans for the work of her Department, what steps she is taking to ensure joint working between health and local authorities.

Mr. Bowis: Health authorities and local authorities have a statutory duty to co-operate to secure and advance the health and welfare of the people of England and Wales. An important aspect of this is the joint commissioning of community care services by health and local authorities. Work is in hand to develop practical guidance to encourage this.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) of 18 April, *Official Report*, column *396*, regarding her plans for the work of her Department, what new safeguards she will be introducing to ensure that medicines and medical devices sold or in use in the United Kingdom meet standards of safety.

Mr. Sackville: A range of controls to ensure the safety, quality and efficacy of medicines already exists under powers set out in the Medicines Act 1968. These will be developed further with the coming into force of new European Community procedures—"Future Systems"—from 1 January 1995, which provide for high standards of pre- and post-licensing control across the European Community.

With respect to medical devices, from 1 January 1993 a series of three medical devices directives regulating the safety and marketing of medical devices throughout the European Community started to come into effect in the United Kingdom. The directives will eventually cover all medical devices on sale or in use in the United Kingdom. They are designed to ensure safety and performance and to prohibit the marketing of any devices which compromise the health and safety of patients, users, and where appropriate, any other persons.

Lewisham Hospital

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals she intends to make with regard to Lewisham hospital if her proposed merger of Guy's and St. Thomas's hospitals goes ahead; what increase she envisages in the number of accident and emergency cases to be dealt with at Lewisham hospital; and how many additional beds Lewisham hospital will require to meet the increase.

Dr. Mawhinney: The South East London health authority is working with Guy's and St. Thomas's hospital trust, King's healthcare national health service trust and Lewisham hospital NHS trust to assess the likely changes in patient flows both in attendances at emergency departments and in-patient admissions as a result of proposed changes in the Guy's and St. Thomas's trust. Proposals will be the subject of public consultation later this year.

Treatment Priorities

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received in relation to the report of the Association of Community Health Councils of England and Wales with respect to the differentiation in levels of priority for treatment other than in relation to clinical need; what consultations she has had with the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts with respect to the contents of the report; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: We will study the Association of Community Health Councils of England and Wales report carefully. By ensuring value for money, fundholders are making more resources available to the national health service; savings are ploughed back into patient care, waiting lists are reduced, and services are made more accessible, for example through out-patient clinics held in the surgery. We regularly meet the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts to discuss how we can build on the success of NHS reforms.

Private Finance

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list all those national health service projects worth over £250,000 which have been financed by private sector money since February 1993.

Mr. Sackville: *[pursuant to his reply, 14 April 1994, c. 293]:* I regret that there was an error in my previous reply. The amended table lists 19 schemes, omitting United Leeds Teaching Hospitals national health service trust which was incorrecly included.

National health service projects using private capital over £1 million approved since February 1993

- Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow Health Agency: lease of office accommodation.
- Yorkshire Regional Health Authority: clinical waste incineration.
- Hastings and Rother NHS Trust: Conquest Hospital staff residences.
- West Middlesex Hospital: endoscopy unit.
- North Bedfordshire Health Authority: residential accommodation at Steppingley and Biggleswade.
- Bolton Health Authority: clinical waste incineration.
- New River Health Authority: lease of office accommodation.
- Leicester Mental Health Services: lease of new Trust Headquarters.
- William Harvey Hospital (Ashford): clinical waste incineration.
- Barnet Health Authority: residential accommodation in Hendon.
- Plymouth and Torbay Health Authority: clinical waste incineration.
- Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster Health Authority: staff residences at Carlton Gate.
- East Sussex Health Authority: residential accommodation for continuing care of the elderly.

Brent and Harrow Health Authority: provision of residential accommodation.
Doncaster Healthcare NHS Trust: clinical waste incineration.
Kent and Canterbury Hospitals NHS Trust: staff accommodation.
St. James' NHS Trust, Leeds: combined heat and power plant.
Hertfordshire Health Agency: lease of office accommodation.
Hillingdon Health Agency: lease of office accommodation.

TREASURY

Public Appointments

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of public appointments made by his Department in 1993 were of *(a)* Asians and *(b)* black people; and if he will list their names.

Mr. Nelson: The percentage of Asian and black people who took up public appointments made by the Treasury in 1993 are 5·5 per cent. and nil respectively.

The data on the ethnic origin of public appointees are collected in confidence. I am therefore unable to list their names.

Fuel (VAT)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what amounts of advance payments for fuel had been paid by Government Departments as at 31 March.

Sir John Cope: Government Departments were already subject to VAT on their business use of fuel. Hence expenditure on fuel and power by Government Departments was largely unaffected by the extension of VAT to domestic fuel and power.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has received from *(a)* individuals and *(b)* organisations on the imposition of VAT on domestic energy since the original announcement that it would be levied; and how many in each case were in favour of the increase.

Sir John Cope: I have received a large number of representations on fuel and power, but the records that are kept do not give sufficient information to answer the question in detail.

Fraud (EC Grants)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost to United Kingdom public funds of fraud involving grants from the EC for which investigations have been completed and charges upheld; and what is his estimate of the cost to public funds for cases which are still under investigation.

Sir John Cope: It is not possible to give an estimate of the cost to the United Kingdom of EC budget fraud either in the case of investigations that have been completed or in the case of those that are continuing. The cost depends on a number of factors, including: how much was actually paid from Community funds; how much has been recovered or offset from other expenditure; where the fraud took place—that is, in the United Kingdom, other member state or third country; and whether it involved expenditure from the budget or, for example, evasion of duties depriving the Community of revenue.

What is, however, clear is that fraud against the financial interests of the Community, and therefore of taxpayers in member states, is at an unacceptable level. The United Kingdom is at the forefront of the campaign to reduce fraud and otherwise improve financial management in the Community.

Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what effect he expects the change in the trade deficit consignment on the reassessment of the Intrastat calculations to have on the exchange rate; when he expects the revised figures to be published; and what preparations he is making to safeguard the pound sterling.

Mr. Nelson: With regard to the publication of any necessary adjustments to the estimates of the balance of United Kingdom visible trade, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 18 April 1994, *Official Report*, column *364*.

Sterling's exchange rate is floating and it is not my practice to make predictions about its level. Movements in sterling's exchange rate form part of our continuing assessment of monetary conditions but we do not set target rates.

VAT

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the gross and net yields for value added tax for 1992 and 1993 and the first quarter of 1994.

Sir John Cope: The yields for value added tax gross and net of repayments are as follows:

£ billion

	1992	*1993*	*[1]1994*
Gross	63·5	64·5	17·3
Net	37·7	37·8	10·7

[1] First quarter.

It should be noted that the difference between the gross and net figures given above relates only to actual repayments to traders.

Privatised Companies (Debt)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has for the disposal of some or all of the Treasury's holding of debt in privatised companies.

Mr. Dorrell: The Treasury has agreed to the repurchase of debt issued to Her Majesty's Government by Eastern Electricity plc. The debt is:

£ million	*Per cent.*
59	[1]12·661
59	[2]12·365

[1] Due September 1999.
[2] Due September 2008.

Eastern Electricity plc will today pay Her Majesty's Treasury £144·827 million to repurchase these bonds.

As announced on 1 March, the Treasury is planning to dispose in 1994-95 of part of its holding of debt in BT plc and certain of the privatised electricity companies, as part

of its strategy for meeting its published proceeds target of £5·5 billion. The Treasury is considering its strategy for this debt disposal.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Live Animals

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, if she will make it her policy to ensure that the transport of live animals will be banned in an effective way from the United Kingdom as soon as possible.

Mr. Soames: A ban on the export of animals would be illegal under the treaty of Rome. The Government are pressing the Community to adopt high standards of protection for all animals during transport.

Primates

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 20 January, *Official Report*, column *750*, whether arrangements for approval of establishments as sources of primates under directive 92/65/EEC have now been put in place by agriculture departments in Great Britain.

Mr. Soames: Yes, we have written to such establishments setting out the procedures for approval under directive 92/65.

EMPLOYMENT

Earnings

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the current average weekly, and hourly earnings, exclusive of overtime, for each year since 1989, of full-time employees in the categories *(a)* male manual, *(b)* male non-manual, *(c)* female manual, *(d)* female non-manual, *(e)* male and female manual and *(f)* male and female non-manual in (i) Doncaster, (ii) Barnsley, (iii) Rotherham and (iv) Sheffield; and what are the equivalent national figures.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The available information closest to that requested is for the metropolitan county of South Yorkshire.

Information for South Yorkshire and for Great Britain can be found in the "New Earnings Survey" reports for each of the years requested. Information for manual and non-manual men and women workers separately can be found in tables 108, 109, 111 and 112 of part E and information for manual and non-manual men and women workers combined in table X5 of part A. Copies of these publications can be found in the Library.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many parliamentary questions, in the period November 1992 to March 1993, were answered with the response that the information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost; and how many were referred on to an agency chief executive.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of answers given to parliamentary questions from November 1992 to March 1993, recorded on the POLIS database as including a reference to disproportionate cost or to information not held or collected centrally was 32.

During the same period, the number of questions referred for answer to the Employment Service, the only agency in the Department with responsibility for replying to parliamentary questions on operational matters was 67.

This represents 3·2 and 6·8 per cent. respectively of all parliamentary questions replied to by the Department in the same period.

South Thames Training and Enterprise Council

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which organisations in Southwark had contracts with South Thames training and enterprise council in 1993-94 and will have no contract with South Thames training and enterprise council in 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: South Thames training and enterprise council has not renewed contracts in 1994-95 with seven of the training organisations in Southwark that it contracted with in 1993-94. The organisations that did not have their contracts renewed are as follows:

Caribbean Teachers Association
Community Youth Provisions
Euroworld Data Ltd.
Mother Goose Nurseries
South Bank University
Southwark College
Walworth Garden Services Ltd.

TECs are responsible for planning and arranging Government-funded training and enterprise programmes. TECs uses their knowledge of the local labour market to help them determine the range and nature of such training and enterprise initiatives that will best meet the needs of both individuals and businesses in their area. These initiatives are delivered through a wide range of colleges, training providers and enterprise agencies. It is for TECs to decide the most appropriate organisations with which to contract.

European Social Fund

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 14 April, *Official Report*, column *288*, what has been the earliest date in each of the past five years on which any voluntary organisations have been told whether they have had funding for European social fund projects starting on 1 January of that year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The earliest date on which any voluntary sector project received notification that it had approval for ESF funding is shown was:

in 1990—December 1990;
in 1991—10 May 1991;
in 1992—13 January 1992;
in 1993—19 January 1993.

These figures relate to projects approved in the period 1990-93 under objectives 3 and 4. Before 1990, the European Commission considered projects for approval and the data are not held.

Water Pollution, Worcester

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what role the Health and Safety Executive played in the water pollution incident in Worcester on 15 April; what advice it gave to other public or private bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The water pollution incident in Worcester on 15 April is being investigated by the National Rivers Authority and Shropshire county council. The NRA has the primary responsibility for enforcing legislation on water pollution liaising with the Health and Safety Executive as necessary. The HSE has given no advice to public or private bodies but is being kept informed of developments.

Health and Safety

Ms Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many investigations undertaken by the Health and Safety Executive into accidents, incidents and dangerous occurrences in the north-west and in each of the standard administrative regions of England concluded that employee fatigue had played a role.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information is not available in the form requested.

Labour Statistics

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give for *(a)* the Taunton travel-to-work area, *(b)* Somerset *(c)* the south-west region and *(d)* the United Kingdom the total numbers of (i) males and (ii) females unemployed for (1) May 1979, (2) June 1983, (3) August 1986, (4) June 1987, (5) March 1991, (6) March 1992, (7) March 1993 and (8) March 1994.

Miss Widdecombe: Seasonally adjusted claimant unemployment figures are available regionally from April 1974. For travel-to-work areas and counties, only unadjusted unemployment figures are available and these go back to June 1983. All this data can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Youth Training

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many YT recipients in each age group had income below the income support level in *(a)* the latest available period before 11 April and *(b)* the period after that date.

Miss Widdecombe: This information is not available.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Coe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is being done to reduce industrial tribunal waiting lists.

Miss Widdecombe: I have asked officials to review the operation of the industrial tribunals with a view to identifying any changes which would help them to cope with an increasing volume and complexity of cases with reduced delays, while containing demands on public expenditure. Meanwhile, additional resources are being allocated to help contain the delays.

Disabled People

Mr. Berry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the unemployment rate of disabled people.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 28 April 1994]:* The labour force survey asks people of working age if they currently have a health problem or disability which limits the kind of paid work they can do. Estimates based on answers to this question will include people with short-term health problems and disabilities as well as those registered as disabled.

The latest LFS estimates for summer 1993 show that, in Great Britain, the International Labour Organisation unemployment rate for such people was 22 per cent.

Employment Appeals Tribunal

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many appellants to the employment appeals tribunal had preliminary hearings in each of the months following the retirment of Mr. Justice Wood.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 28 April 1994]:* The figures are shown in the table:

	Number
October 1993	28
November 1993	49
December 1993	31
January 1994	39
February 1994	83
March 1994	32

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many appellants to the employment appeals tribunal had preliminary hearings in each of the 24 months prior to the retirement of Mr. Justice Wood.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 28 April 1994]:* The figures are shown in the table:

	Number
October 1991	22
November 1991	24
December 1991	19
January 1992	19
February 1992	15
March 1992	16
April 1992	2
May 1992	6
June 1992	12
July 1992	41
August 1992	6
September 1992	18
October 1992	34
November 1992	37
December 1992	24
January 1993	53
February 1993	57
March 1993	16
April 1993	25
May 1993	30
June 1993	34
July 1993	52
August 1993	1
September 1993	0

Labour Statistics, Scotland

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employees in Scotland are in part-time jobs.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 April 1994]:* I have been asked to reply. For December 1993, the latest date for which information is available, it is estimated that 542,000 employees in employment in Scotland worked part-time.

EDUCATION

School Transport

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will extend to all local education authorities the dispensation agreed with Strathclyde council education authority in respect of finance of seat belt installation in school minibuses and buses; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make it his policy to apply to local education authorities in England the same rules on school transport as are applied by Strathclyde regional council; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will publish the guidance issued by his Department to local education authorities in respect of the safety of schoolchildren in transit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has national responsibility for vehicle safety matters.

The Department for Education has already published general advice on school transport to all local education authorities in a circular letter on 21 January 1994. A copy is in the Library. It recommended that seat belts should be worn where fitted, and reminded authorities that home-to-school transport which they provide or arrange must carry pupils in reasonable safety and comfort. It also advised authorities to encourage contractors to observe the school transport safety code to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, which was issued with the endorsement of the Secretary of State in 1991. Copies were distributed to all education authorities and schools.

Sex Education

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to ensure that the skills of those responsible for teaching sex education in schools are co-ordinated with those of health education professionals in the Department of Health.

Mr. Forth: The forthcoming circular on sex education will offer schools advice on liaison with, and the use made of, external sources of help, including health service professionals.

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to set up an inter-departmental working group to share, develop and co-ordinate good practice in the delivery of sex education in schools.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has no such plans. The forthcoming draft circular will give schools comprehensive advice on the discharge of their statutory responsibilities for sex education. Further guidance is already available from a variety of sources.

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to ensure that all schools are able to take advantage of training for delivering sex education, in the period prior to the implementation of the Education Act 1993.

Mr. Forth: The grants for education support and training programme for 1994-95 extends the specific grant already available to support the basic curriculum and assessment to cover teacher in-service training and materials associated with the new arrangements for sex education. Schools are free to use this grant as they judge fit.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. James Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy that children with special educational needs should be educated as near to their home as possible; and what account is taken of the wishes of children and parents in this matter.

Mr. Forth: The Education Act 1993 requires local education authorities to comply with any preference of parents of a child with a statement of special educational needs regarding the maintained school they want their child to attend. This duty applies unless the school is unsuitable to the child's needs or the child's placement would be incompatible with the interests of other children already in the school or with the efficient use of the LEA's resources.

The draft code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs, which we expect to be debated in both Houses shortly, contains extensive guidance on the placement of children with special educational needs, emphasising the importance of parents' views and that, so far as possible, the views of the child are taken into account during the statutory assessment and in the statement.

Mr. James Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what consideration has been given to the use of financial incentives to local education authorities for them to reduce the proportion of children with statements of special educational needs; what link has been made between the amount of money that a local authority receives from Government sources and the reduction of provision in places in special needs schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The draft code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs, which we expect to be debated in both Houses shortly, sets criteria aimed at ensuring that statutory assessments and statements are made only when necessary. It also emphasises the role of mainstream schools in making special educational provision for the majority of pupils with special educational needs.

LEAs may receive capital allocations following the approval of statutory proposals involving surplus place reduction in maintained special schools. Any such allocation will depend on the authority's need for capital expenditure to implement the proposals. My right hon. Friend always takes into account value for money and capital costs when determining such proposals.

Mr. James Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to ensure that provision

for special educational needs places is made a consequence of the informed judgment of parents, education psychologists, teachers and social services as to what is the most desirable education that a child with special needs should receive, and to avoid influence by statistical targets for the percentage of children with special needs in the local authority.

Mr. Forth: The draft code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs, which we expect to be debated in both Houses shortly, offers guidance designed to help teachers, LEA officers and other professionals work together with parents to ensure that every child receives the educational provision appropriate to his or her individual special educational needs.

Mr. James Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his policy governing the percentage of children with statements of special educational needs in a local authority in maintained schools; and in what form this policy is conveyed to local authorities.

Mr. Forth: The Government's policy is set out in the Education Act 1993 and the draft code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs, which we expect to be debated in both Houses shortly, and which, subject to parliamentary approval, will be distributed to all maintained schools and local education authorities. The policy is that children with statements of special educational needs should, subject to the wishes of their parents, be educated alongside their peers in mainstream schools, so long as this would be compatible with the child receiving the special educational provision he or she needs; the interests of other children already in the school; and the efficient use of resources.

The placement of an individual child is a matter for judgment by the local education authority in the light of a statutory assessment of the child: where appropriate and subject to the views of parents, placement might be made in a school not maintained by the LEA.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many schools in England received *(a)* more than £1 million and *(b)* more than £250,000 per annum from his Department under the operation of the assisted places scheme; and if he will list the 50 schools which received most money from his Department under the assisted places scheme, in order, along with the total amounts which they received in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Forth: The information for parts *(a)* and *(b)* is as follows: *(a)* 4; *(b)* 161. The other information requested is shown in the table:

Assisted places schemes 1992-93 academic year

School name	*Fees/expenses remitted by DFE £ thousands*
Dulwich College	1,291
Wisbech Grammar school	1,143
St. Edward's College Liverpool	1,104
Emanuel school	1,046
Latymer Upper school	972
Alleyn's school Dulwich	902
Haberdasher's Aske's Boys school	851
Royal Grammar school Worcester	826
Newcastle-under-Lyme school	815
Hereford Cathedral school	806
Bristol Grammar school	759
Wolverhampton Grammar school	749
Bolton school (Boys)	734
Queen Elizabeth Grammar school Blackburn	726
James Allen's Girls school	721
St. Mary's College Crosby	720
Manchester Grammar school	714
King Edward VI school Southampton	705
Kings school Worcester	701
Wellington school Somerset	692
St. Bede's Manchester	682
Bolton school (Girls)	673
Plymouth College	671
Brighton College	645
William Hulme's Grammar school Manchester	629
King Edward's school Birmingham	624
Godolphin and Latymer school	621
Bradford Grammar school	620
Batley Grammar school	588
Liverpool College	584
Edgehill College	583
Colfe's school	579
Birkenhead High school (GPDST)	564
Hampton school	563
Merchant Taylor's Boys Liverpool	553
City of London school	552
Exeter school	548
Stockport Grammar school	547
St. John's College Southsea	547
Denstone College	541
Malvern College	540
Kingston Grammar school	533
Queen Mary school	532
Bury Grammar school (Girls)	530
Pocklington school	530
Royal Grammar school Guildford	516
Trinity School of John Whitgift Croydon	513
King Edward VII school Lytham	512
Old Palace school	511
Royal Grammar school Newcastle	508

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many parliamentary questions, in the period November 1992 to March 1993, were answered with the response that the information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost; and how many were referred on to an agency chief executive.

Mr. Boswell: The number of answers given to parliamentary questions by the Department for the period requested recorded in the POLIS database as including a reference to the information being available only at disproportionate cost was 56. The number of questions answered recorded by the POLIS database as including a reference to the question being referred to an agency chief executive was two.

TRANSPORT

Executive Agencies

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what targets he has set for the executive agencies in his Department.

Mr. MacGregor: I have set the following key targets for 1994-95 for the Department of Transport's executive agencies.

The key targets for the Coastguard Agency are to:

Discharge my responsibility for maritime search and rescue (SAR), through the agency's own or dedicated assets, by maintaining a 24 hours SAR co-ordinating capability within, and including the coasts and shoreline of, the United Kingdom search and rescue region (UKSRR) and by maintaining a comprehensive radio reception and transmission coverage of the UKSRR which enables SAR co-ordination action for the duration of incidents without interruption or equipment malfunction;

Determine through the United Kingdom SAR and local SAR Committees the availability, readiness, capability and responsiveness of SAR resources, to seek agreements with the appropriate controlling authorities for improvements as necessary and to report to me, identifying any improvements, by March 1995;

Pursue an SAR prevention strategy through training, patrols, and public relations endeavours, including a safety campaign to be launched by 30 April (costing £25,000) designed to reduce incidents involving sea canoeists;

Maintain a fully operational 24 hours channel navigation information service covering the Dover strait traffic separation scheme, in concert with the appropriate French authorities;

Discharge my responsibility for the prevention of marine pollution by the maintenance of a national contingency plan, and in particular to test the effectiveness of the plan by undertaking a major exercise and to report to me on the outcome by 31 March 1995, and where appropriate to activate the plan within 30 minutes of an incident and commence action at sea to deal with a spill of dispersible oil within four hours of notification of an incident;

Carry out 500 hours of aerial surveillance of the sea area for which the United Kingdom has responsibility, to detect or deter incidents of marine pollution, including illegal discharges from ships;

Make a running costs efficiency gain of 3 per cent.; and;

Investigate, and report to me by December 1994, on a means of measuring awareness of, and satisfaction with, the services provided by the agency.

The key targets for the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency are:

To meet or better an overall efficiency improvement of 4 per cent.;

Deliver 95 per cent. of ordinary driving licence cases to customers within 12 working days of receipt and deliver medical cases within 22 working days of receipt;

Deliver 95 per cent. of vocational driving licence cases within 10 working days of receipt and deliver medical cases within 30 working days of receipt;

Deliver 95 per cent. of first provisional driving licence cases within 11 working days of receipt;

Deliver 95 per cent. of cases involving changes to vehicle registration documents within 13 working days of receipt;

Deliver 95 per cent. of registration documents for new vehicles within 13 working days of receipt;

Answer 80 per cent. of telephone enquiries within 30 seconds;

Deliver answers to 95 per cent. of written enquiries within eight working days of receipt; and

Complete successfully 457,000 VED enforcement cases by imposition of penalties and recover through penalties and duty from induced relicensing at least £2·60 for every £1 (full costs) spent by DVLA on VED enforcement.

The targets and key tasks for the Highways Agency are to:

Report, using existing management information systems, on the agency's internal unit costs for the management and supervision of new construction schemes over £3 million in value, compared to costs in the last three years;

Develop an information system for attributing all staff and other costs to the agency's outputs, identifying those attributable to motorways and other trunk roads separately wherever possible, so as to extend the coverage of unit costs beyond the new construction of national schemes, and enable comprehensive targets for reductions in unit costs to be set in future years;

Meet the aims and targets enshrined within *The Citizen's Charter, The Road User's Charter* and the agency's charter standard statement *Your Home and Trunk Road Proposals;*

Develop systems for measuring the performance of the network, including quality of service indicators, and introducing targets for 1995-96;

Reach scheme milestones designated with the prioritised roads programme and listed in *The National Roads Programme: Summary and Milestones* as follows: complete 18 schemes; start works on 22 schemes; and reach 85 per cent. of the other scheme milestones;

State in the agency's Annual Report the average time taken to complete schemes that are completed in 1994-95, compared with the performance in recent years, and the average time between milestones for all those schemes that reach milestones in 1994-95, and compare this with previous years' performance;

Complete all schemes within the approved scheme brief (that is, on time and to budget) and, with the central Department, devise appropriate performance measures;

Monitor, and state in the Annual Report, the benefit-cost ratio for the national roads programme based on the scheme briefs; and agree with the central Department a target level for 1995-96 and following years, below which the average should not fall;

Monitor, and state in the annual report, the unit cost of new construction;

Carry out up to five post-scheme evaluations as agreed with the central Department;

Maintain the trunk road network effectively by planning a programme of capital maintenance to ensure that the target of reducing the percentage of the road network past the critical condition to 7 to 8 per cent. by the year 2000 is achieved and that all bridges on the network are able to carry the full assessment loading for vehicles of 40 tonne maximum gross vehicle weight by the end of 1998, by (in 1994-95): reconstructing 137 nearside lane kilometres (nlks) of trunk road and 40 nlks of motorway; overlaying a further 394 nlks of trunk road and 227 nlks of motorway; assessing the structural capacity of 795 bridges and strengthening 177 bridges; and monitoring, and stating in the annual report, the unit cost of road maintenance;

Contribute to the Government's target of reducing road casualties by one third by the year 2000, compared to the annual average for 1981-85;

Publish, as part of the agency's annual report, a section reporting its activities to promote road safety, including the accident rate on motorways and trunk roads;

Publish as part of the agency's annual report a report on environmental matters; and

Produce certified appropriation accounts by August 1995, and unaudited financial statements in an annual report by October 1995.

The key targets for the Marine Safety Agency are to:

Complete by 30 November the calculations for the phase-in criteria for ro ro passenger ferries built before 1990 and implement the first stage of the North West European ro ro passenger stability agreement and the related United Kingdom regulations by 30 November 1994;

Submit to me an interim report by 31 October 1994 reviewing the fishing vessel safety provisions legislation including the progress made, in consultation with the industry, towards a fishing vessel safety code of practice for vessels under 12 metres in length;

Complete by 31 March 1995 technical negotiations within the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) to secure amendments to chapter one (general provisions) and for the introduction of mandatory ships' routing and reporting under chapter V (safety of navigation) of the safety of life at sea

convention, including the drafting of any statutory instruments to give effect to the adopted amendments in United Kingdom law;

Provide technical input to the European Community (EC) negotiations on the proposed directives dealing with convergent application of IMO rules and resolutions and specifically on segregated ballast tanks, ship safety equipment, transit and access in EC waters, and standards for vessels not covered by the safety of life at sea convention;

Establish by 31 March 1995 mechanisms to allow the delegation of further survey and certification work to the private sector and the arrangements for its audit; and to audit by 31 March 1995 two organisations already authorised to undertake survey and certification work;

Undertake port state control inspections, including operational aspects, of 30 per cent. of the foreign flagged vessels using United Kingdom ports;

Achieve a running costs efficiency gain of 3 per cent.; and

As part of a two year programme of deregulation, produce proposals by 31 December 1994 for a first round of revocations of regulations.

The key targets for the Transport Research Laboratory are to:

Cover full costs with income from customers while meeting the net control total in the 1994-95 *Supply Estimates;*

Ensure direct fee-earning costs as a percentage of total operating costs are greater than 57 per cent.;

Achieve average staff utilisation in research resource centres of at least 1300 hours per year on direct fee-earning work; and

Ensure that at least 94 per cent. of completed projects assessed by customers are rated as satisfactory or better

The key targets for the Vehicle Certification Agency are to:

Issue 90 per cent. of whole vehicle and system and component certificates by dates agreed with customers;

Ensure that at least 98 per cent. of certificates issued are free of errors caused by the agency and where errors do occur to issue corrected documents within three working days in 75 per cent. of cases;

Audit at least 50 per cent. of the agency's approved quality procedures and to achieve a satisfactory appraisal report on technical performance from my Department's chief mechanical engineer;

Achieve, or better, a net output unit cost of £71·29;

Achieve a Treasury accounts direction for the agency's 1994-95 accounts;

Implement a new data system for job and product line costing;

Deliver legislation, enforcement and information programmes required by the Department to timetables and within budget; and

Develop a model contract for the provision of testing services by agents and to begin a trial of that contract with at least one agent.

The key targets for the Vehicle Inspectorate trading fund are to:

Achieve an efficiency improvement of 5 per cent. as measured by the agency's aggregate cost efficiency index;

Break even while achieving a 6 per cent. real rate of return on capital employed;

Achieve an HGV/PSV test exemption rate of less than 0·01 per cent.;

Achieve an HGV/PSV test error rate of less than 0·47 per cent.;

Achieve a roadworthiness prohibition error rate of 0·5 per cent.;

Return 95 per cent. of maintenance assessments for "O" licence renewals and variations within six weeks and 99 per cent. within 12 weeks;

Decide 99 per cent. of all MOT statutory appeals against refusal to issue test certificates within five working days;

Produce 95 per cent. of Traffic Commissioners reports within four weeks unless another deadline has been agreed, and to produce 95 per cent. within the agreed deadline;

Examine a minimum of 1·4 million HGV and 145,000 PSV tachograph charts;

Weigh a minimum of 115,000 goods vehicles; and

Have at least 90 per cent. of weighbridge equipment available nationally.

With regard to key targets for the Driving Standards Agency, I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic gave on 12 April 1994 at column 83.

These targets are set out in the agencies' business plans which also include management objectives and performance indicators, where appropriate to the agencies' business. Copies of the business plans of the Coastguard Agency, Highways Agency, Marine Safety Agency and Vehicle Certification Agency have been placed in the Library of the House. The business plans of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency and the vehicle inspectorate will be placed in the Library shortly. The business plan of the Transport Research Laboratory is commercially confidential.

Metropolitan Traffic Area Office

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in which month and year the Metropolitan traffic area office moved to Charles house, London; and in which month and year it closed.

Mr. Key: The Metropolitan traffic area office moved from Bromyard avenue to Charles house between July and September 1988. The Metropolitan traffic area office in Charles house was closed in May 1991 as part of the restructuring of the traffic areas.

Tunnel House, Clayton

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions his Department has had with British Rail about preserving the 1836 Tunnel house at Clayton built over the London-Brighton line; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: None, the future of the Clayton Tunnel house is a matter for Railtrack. I understand however, that Railtrack is currently assessing what repairs if any are required to this grade II listed building.

BR Land (Trepass)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many cases in respect of trespass and endangering safety of persons on railway lines were brought by the British Transport police and the Crown Prosecution Service in each year since 1991.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows:

	Trespass	*Endanger safety*
1991	4,149	386
1992	5,150	344
1993	7,010	543

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many incidents of hunts trespassing on British Rail property were recorded in *(a)* 1991, *(b)* 1992 and *(c)* 1993.

Mr. Freeman: There were three recorded incidents of hunts trespassing on British Rail property in 1991, 10 in 1992 and 11 in 1993.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what advice his Department issues to British Rail regarding trespass on BR property.

Mr. Freeman: The Department does not issue advice to BR or Railtrack regarding trespass on their property.

Traffic Area Offices

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Tranpsort, pursuant to his answer of 7 February, *Official Report*, column *97*, how much was spent in the financial year 1993-94 on publishing the traffic area office annual report and the traffic area office customer service guides; and what are the costs of the customer service guides as a percentage of the running costs of traffic area co-ordination division and the traffic area office network.

Mr. Key: The cost of publishing the traffic area annual report and the customer service guides during the financial year 1993-94 was £3,500. The costs of the customer service guides represented less than 0·5 per cent. of running costs of traffic area co-ordination division and the traffic area office network.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) of 28 February, *Official Report*, column *563*, what plans he has to make available information about how to complain about goods or public service vehicles at places other than traffic area offices; and what plans he has to publicise the existence of traffic area offices.

Mr. Key: Complaints about goods vehicles and public service vehicles may be addressed to a number or organisations depending on the nature of the complaint. The two main organisations within my Department are the Vehicle Inspectorate and the local traffic area office. Both these organisations have published or are about to publish codes of practice which will explain how to make complaints.

The code of practice for traffic area offices which came into effect on 1 April 1994 explains the operator licensing and bus registration services they provide their customers. This code will shortly be printed in leaflet form for general distribution and will include a map showing the eight traffic area offices, their areas of responsibility, addresses and telephone numbers. A press notice will be issued to publicise the leaflet.

Goods Vehicles

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 27 January, *Official Report*, column *27*, for what reasons he does not collect figures for the number of objections received in the renewal of goods vehicle operator licences.

Mr. Key: The Department collects figures for the number of objections to all types of applications and these are held on computer. It would be possible to collate the information for the number of objections to renewals of goods vehicle operator licences received but for 1991-92 and 1992-93 that could be done only at disproportionate cost. This is because a special computer programme would be needed to extract the necessary information.

"Guide to Making Representations"

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in which month and year the last two editions of his "Guide to Making Representations" were printed.

Mr. Key: The goods vehicle operator licensing "Guide to Making Representations" was first published in October 1986. A revised edition of the guide was published in October 1992.

Rail Privatisation

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he is taking to ensure that his target of at least 51 per cent. of British Rail being privatised by April 1996 is met; what assurances he has received from the Franchising Director that this target will be met; and what penalties and measures are available to him to take action if the target is not met.

Mr. Freeman: The Secretary of State has set for the Franchising Director the targets of commencing the competitive process for the first six franchises by the end of 1994, awarding the first six franchises by the end of 1995, and securing that 51 per cent. or more of the railway passenger services currently operated by BR are provided under franchise agreements by 1 April 1996. It will be for the Franchising Director to achieve these targets, and the franchising programme he announced on 21 April indicates how he intends to do so. We have no reason to believe that these targets will not be met. Should a problem arise which would result in the targets not being met we would need to consider with the Franchising Director what action would be appropriate in the particular circumstances of the case.

Prohibition Notices

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 27 January, *Official Report*, column *389*, if he will provide a breakdown of the reasons for the issue of immediate prohibitions against passenger-carrying vehicles in 1992-93.

Mr. Key: The information is not held in the form requested and could be produced at only disproportionate cost. However, an analysis of all prohibitions by defect type is available for 1992-93 and is as follows.

Defect	*Number of times occurred*
Seat belts	0
Diesel smoke emission	259
Road wheels and hubs	67
Size and type of tyres	3
Condition of tyres	150
Bumper bars	3
Spare wheel/carrier	6
Vehicle/trailer coupling	0
Coupling on trailer	1
Trailer landing legs	3
Wings and wheel arches	3
Cab security	0
Passenger doors, drivers doors and emergency exits	255
Drivers accommodation	16
Driving seat	13
Security of body	17
Exterior of body, including access doors/luggage flaps	139
Interior of body, passenger entrance, exit steps and platforms	321

Defect	Number of times occurred
Mirrors	2
View to the front	6
Condition of windows, glass or other transparent material	38
Windscreen wipers and washers	50
Speedometer	1
Audible warning (horn)	5
Driving controls	70
Tachograph	3
Play at steering wheel	8
Steering wheel	5
Steering column	6
Speed limiter	0
Pressure/vacuum warning	4
Build Up of Pressure Vacuum	15
Hand Lever Operating Mechanical Brakes	20
Service Brake Pedal	4
Service Brake Operation	6
Hand Operated Brake Control Valves	5
Condition of Chassis	40
Electrical Wiring and Equipment	48
Engine and Transmission Mountings	15
Oil and Waste Leaks	325
Fuel Tanks and Systems	275
Exhaust and Waste Systems	112
Suspension Pins and Bushes	71
Suspension Spring Units and Linkages	145
Attachment of Spring Units, Linkages and Sub-Frame	90
Shock Absorbers	27
Axles, Stub Axles and Wheel Bearings	16
Steering Linkage	112
Steering Gear	29
Power Steering	71
Transmission	57
Additional Braking Devices	1
Mechanical Brake Components	58
Brake Actuators	54
Braking Systems and Components	220
Rear Markings	1
Front Position of Front End Outline Marker	24
Rear Position, Rear End Outline Marker, Rear Fog and Rear Registration Lamps	15
Reflectors	3
Direction Indicators and Hazard Warning Lamps	44
Aim of Headlamps	23
Headlamps	50
Stop Lamps	55
Trailer Parking Brake	0
Service Brake Performance	94
Secondary Brake Performance	52
Parking Brake Performance	104
Addition Brakes Performance	2
Annual Team Item	1
Other	19

Public Appointments

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many persons are employed by *(a)* the British Railways Board, *(b)* the regulator, *(c)* the Franchising Director, *(d)* Railtrack and *(e)* train operating companies on salaries in excess of £30,000 per annum.

Mr. Freeman: BR employs 1,228 staff with salaries in excess of £30,000 per annum: the regulator, 17; the Franchising Director, 17; and Railtrack, 349. Staff employed in the train operating units are still employees of BR and are included in BR's total.

Red Warning Vehicles Scheme

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what increase in the licensing of vehicles there has been resulting from the national red warning vehicles scheme launched by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency in 1993.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 28 April 1994]:* The windscreen warning notice scheme started as a pilot in 1992 and was extended throughout England and Wales early in 1993.

We estimate that in 1991-92, before the start of the scheme, some 115,000 evaders or would-be evaders were encouraged to relicense their vehicles as a direct result of vehicle excise duty enforcement activity, realising some £8·4 million in revenue that would otherwise not have been collected. In 1993-94, with the scheme in full operation, an estimated 345,000 motorists were encouraged to relicense, with a revenue recovery of some £27·9 million.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Press Releases

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley) of 18 April, *Official Report,* column *365,* if he will ensure that all Government news releases are transmitted electronically to POLIS at the same time as they are placed in the Parliamentary Press Gallery.

Mr. Waldegrave: Distribution of news releases is a matter for individual Departments.

DEFENCE

Reserve Forces

Mr. Colvin To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what percentage of the Regular Reserves in 1993 *(a)* responded to questions as to their suitability for military service and *(b)* provided full details as to their medical conditions;

(2) how frequently the information which is held centrally by each service on the suitability for military service of members of the Regular reserve is *(a)* updated and *(b)* verified with individual reservists.

Mr. Hanley: Information on the suitability for military service of members of the Royal Fleet Reserve and the Regular Army Reserve is provided by personnel completing an annual questionnaire, which includes a section on the individual's medical condition. The Royal Navy introduced a postal reporting system in July 1993 and in the first six months some 1,300 members of the Royal Fleet Reserve were contacted, of whom approximately 50 per cent. replied. The Army's Regular Reserve use a similar system, and at the end of 1993 about 55 per cent. of those contacted had responded.

The Royal Air Force system requires the reservist to inform his management centre only when his or her circumstances change. In 1993, less than 1 per cent. of the reserve strength did so.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the respective roles of the Army Reserve, Army service pensioners with recall liability and the Army's Long-term Reserve.

Mr. Hanley: Ex-Regular Army reservists can be used in the following roles regardless of the category of reserve to which they belong:

a. To provide reinforcements to bring regular and TA units and headquarters up to their war establishment.
b. To provide Battle Casualty Replacements.
c. To form sub-units for Home Defence tasks.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service pensioners have a recall liability.

Mr. Hanley: The numbers of service pensioners excluding officers who had a recall liability at 31 March 1994 are as follows rounded to the nearest 100:

	Number
Royal Navy:	11,300
Royal Marines:	1,000
Army:	32,900
Royal Air Force:	21,900

The liability of ex-Regular officers for recall is not dependent on receipt of a pension, and information in the form requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions, and in what numbers, men of the Army Reserve have been called out for training over the past five years *(a)* for a period not exceeding 15 days and *(b)* for a period not exceeding 36 hours.

Mr. Hanley: The number called out once annually for training since 1989 are as follows:

	Number
1989-90	54,719
1990-91	53,559
1991-92	47,278
1992-93	Nil
1993-94	Nil

On all of these occasions the training period did not exceed 36 hours.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the sequence of call-out of all components of the Army Reserves under section 10 of the Reserve Forces Act 1980 when it appears to Her Majesty's Government that national danger is imminent or a great emergency has arisen.

Mr. Hanley: Section 10 of the Reserve Forces Act 1980 applies directly to the Territorial Army and Army Reserve. There is no restriction on the order in which they or any other Army reservists are called out.

The Act also provides that when members of the Army Reserve are called out for permanent service under section 10, Army pensioners may be recalled under section 32(1) and men of the Army Long-term Reserve may be recalled for service under section 34(1).

Call-out of members of the Regular Army Reserve of Officers—RARO—is governed by the Pay Warrant 1964, article 285. It provides that class 1 of RARO, which includes most ex-Regular officers, may be called-out if the call-out of Army reservists has been ordered when national danger is imminent or a great emergency has arisen.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what criteria were used, and what specialist training was required, in respect of those members of the Regular Reserve called out during the Gulf conflict.

Mr. Hanley: Regular Reserves were called out during the Gulf conflict to fill specific posts. The selection process was designed to identify individuals who, because of their experience and qualifications, needed only the minimum of training to achieve operational readiness in those posts.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which Territorial Army units are between two thirds and 80 per cent. recruited.

Mr. Hanley: As at 1 April 1994 there were 10 Territorial Army units between two-thirds and 80 per cent. recruited. They are as follows:

Unit	*District*	*Per cent.*
102 Battalion Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers	Eastern District	67
77 Engineer Regiment	Eastern District	73
Scots Yeomanry	Scotland	67
32 Signal Regiment	Scotland	77
205 Field Hospital	Scotland	68
2 Wessex	Southern District	80
103 Battalion Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers	Southern District	72
203 Field Hospital	Wales and Western District	74
31 Signal Regiment	London	75
257 Field Hospital	London	70

Imphal Barracks

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what vacant office space there will be at Imphal barracks, York, once the pay and manning function has completed its relocation.

Mr. Hanley: The move of the Infantry and Royal Artillery manning and record offices and the regional pay office will release approximately 32,895 sq ft of office space at Imphal barracks.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what will be the cost of maintaining the office buildings at Imphal barracks during 1994-95.

Mr. Hanley: The estimated cost of maintaining the office buildings at Imphal barracks for financial year 1994-95 is £40,000.

Officer Training Corps

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the established strength and the actual strength as at 1 January of the Officer Training Corps.

Mr. Hanley: As at 1 January 1994 the established strength of the Officer Training Corps was 4,884 and the actual strength was 5,579. The higher number in actual strength results from permitted overbearing during the

recruitment process between October and April of each year. Numbers are planned to reduce to the established strength by 1 April each year.

Air Vice Marshal Colville

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state the salary and financial value of other benefits paid to Air Vice Marshal Colville as Air Officer Commanding as at 31 March; and what will be his payments from 1 April as chief executive of the Training Group Defence Agency.

Mr. Hanley: The rate of salary and range of allowances to which Air Vice Marshal Colville is entitled as a two-star officer filling a command appointment are unaffected by his appointment as chief executive of the Training Group Defence Agency.

The salary of two-star officers on 31 March 1994 was £56,710-05. On 1 April 1994, it was increased to £59,794-30 on payment of the 1994-95 pay award and the final stage of the 1992 pay award for senior military personnel.

In respect of his current appointment, Air Vice Marshal Colville is entitled to an entertainment allowance of £8-73 per day. In common with all service personnel, he is entitled to claim various allowances appropriate to his domestic and personal circumstances.

Clothing and Textiles Directorate

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will take into account when determining the location of the clothing and textiles directorate the loss of civilian jobs in York and surrounding areas caused by the relocation of Ministry of Defence functions.

Mr. Hanley: Full account is being taken of civilian job losses at all Ministry of Defence establishments where the reduction of a task or a closure has given rise to surplus accommodation which could be considered for an alternative defence requirement. This includes the sites at Imphal barracks and Strensall barracks in York and MOD sites in Harrogate.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the criteria being applied by consultants in identifying a suitable site for the clothing and textiles directorate.

Mr. Hanley: The criteria being applied to identify a site or sites for the directorate of clothing and textiles authority are that it should be located to the best advantage to the authority while offering the best value for money.

Civilian Employees

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by region the number of Ministry of Defence civilian employees in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years.

Mr. Hanley: Civilian employees include scientists, engineers, security and medical staff and many other disciplines, as well as administrators. The overall numbers are as follows:

Economic planning region	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*
South East	57,798·5	58,339·5	57,007·0	55,230·0	46,836·0
East Anglia	2,552·5	2,506·5	2,537·0	2,694·0	2,667·5
South West	30,019·0	29,939·0	29,756·5	28,882·5	28,398·0
West Midlands	8,762·5	8,775·5	8,820·0	8,721·0	8,510·0
East Midlands	3,470·5	3,407·0	3,658·5	3,753·0	3,831·5
Yorks and Humberside	5,850·0	5,889·0	5,685·0	5,397·5	5,167·5
North West	2,949·5	2,974·0	2,967·0	2,858·0	2,729·5
Northern	3,107·0	3,081·0	3,038·5	2,929·0	2,727·0
Wales	5,566·5	5,530·5	5,490·0	5,436·0	5,026·0
Scotland	12,314·5	12,151·5	11,984·0	11,735·0	11,624·0
Northern Ireland	2,688·5	2,646·5	2,632·5	2,782·0	2,933·0
Elsewhere in United Kingdom	3·0	3·0	3·0	2·0	0·0
Total United Kingdom	135,082	134,243	133,579	130,420	120,450

Ammunition

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 19 April, *Official Report*, column *501*, what was the total cost of *(a)* the L15 rounds and *(b)* the M107 rounds referred to and the present item cost of each round.

Mr. Hanley: The total cost of the F15 rounds was about £55,000,000 and that of the M107 rounds about £70,000,000. It is not the practice of my Department to disclose current prices as they are commercially confidential.

PINDAR Bunker

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many crisis and contingency plans exist for the use of PINDAR bunker; what is the staffing level for each of these; how many exercises have so far been held in the PINDAR bunker; and how many are planned;

(2) if he will make a statement on the role and function of the PINDAR bunker; and when PINDAR was first declared to have its full operational capability;

(3) which categories of persons have spaces allocated for them in PINDAR; and how many spaces are allocated in the PINDAR bunker for each job function.

Mr. Hanley: The purpose of the PINDAR joint operations centre is to provide the Government with a protected crisis management facility. It became operational on 7 December 1992. A number of crisis and contingency

plans exist for the use of PINDAR and the centre is manned by a permanent staff, which is augmented as necessary in times of crisis. There are a number of categories of personnel allocated space in PINDAR, including Ministers, senior military and civilian personnel, plus service and civilian operational and support staff. It would not be appropriate to give any more detailed information than this as it would relate to operational capability.

There have been two major exercises and a number of small ones held there to date, and it is planned to hold one major and a varying number of minor exercises each year.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many toilet *(a)* cubicles and *(b)* urinals are installed in the PINDAR bunker; and how long the toilet facilities in the PINDAR bunker are planned to last if it was sealed from the outside world.

Mr. Hanley: There are sufficient toilet facilities provided for the full complement of the site. These facilities are usable as long as power within the site is maintained for pumping waste.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what provisions have been made for the occupants to escape the PINDAR bunker in the event that the building above it has collapsed on top of it.

Mr. Hanley: A variety of routes exist which would enable the occupants to escape from the facility in the event that the building above it had collapsed.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the location of the PINDAR bunker; how many square metres of space it comprises; and on how many levels.

Mr. Hanley: The PINDAR facility is located beneath the Ministry of Defence main building in Whitehall. Details of its size and layout are of an operational nature and it is not our practice to reveal such information.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will place plans of the PINDAR bunker in the Library;

(2) at what depth below the surface is *(a)* the highest and *(b)* the lowest level of the PINDAR bunker.

Mr. Hanley: It is not our practice to reveal information of this kind as it relates to operational capability.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* lifts and *(b)* staircases connect the PINDAR bunker with the surface level; and what transport systems connect the PINDAR bunker to other sites.

Mr. Hanley: There are sufficient means of access and egress from the PINDAR facility.

The facility is not connected to any transport system.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the total cost of the PINDAR bunker from conception to operational status; and from which subheads of which votes the funds for PINDAR were taken.

Mr. Hanley: The total cost of the PINDAR facility has been £126,300,000 of which £66,300,000 was spent on the civil works programme. All costs since 1989 have been charged against vote subheads 2L2 and 2M5. Prior to this date civil works costs were charged against vote 4.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many beds are contained in the PINDAR bunker.

Mr. Hanley: There are sufficient bunks within the PINDAR facility for the full complement when working a three-shift system.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how long the catering facilities in the PINDAR bunker are planned to last if sealed from the outside world.

Mr. Hanley: Catering facilities within the PINDAR facility are designed to support operations for as long as is considered operationally necessary.

Diver Mist

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement about Exercise Diver Mist;

(2) which parts of the final exercise evaluation report of Exercise Diver Mist will be made public.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on 25 April, *Official Report*, columns 84-85.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total financial cost to Her Majesty's Government of Exercise Diver Mist; and from which subheads of which votes these costs were taken.

Mr. Hanley: The costs attributable to exercise Diver Mist are not separately identified within departmental budgets and the information requested could therefore only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* British and *(b)* United States personnel were involved in Exercise Diver Mist.

Mr. Hanley: Approximately 700 British and 800 United States personnel were involved in Exercise Diver Mist at the site at Barnham in Suffolk.

Costs Study

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the defence costs study; when the defence costs study started; and when it is expected to be completed.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 7 December 1993 at column *176*. The defence costs study was formally launched on 1 December 1993. We hope to be in a position to make an announcement about its outcome before the summer recess.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 15 April, *Official Report*, column *348*, which of the reports from the defence costs study he has received are final reports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Ministers have now seen final reports from 31 of the 33 individual defence costs studies.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 23 March, *Official Report*, column *337*, which of the defence costs study team are producing reports which will be relevant to decisions relating to spares; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: One of the defence costs study teams was specifically concerned with the examination of repair, spares, storage and distribution within the MOD services. A number of other defence costs study teams scrutinised areas of support activity in which the storage, handling and use of spares play a part.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all of the non-MOD organisations and individuals that have been consulted in the course of the defence costs study; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Defence costs study teams were encouraged to consult widely, but a record of all the organisations and individuals consulted is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the non-civil service participants in the defence costs study; and under what scale of remuneration the non-civil service participants in the defence costs study are being paid.

Mr. Hanley: Non-civil service participants in the defence costs study have included Ministers, service personnel and a number of consultants and advisers from outside MOD. External participation has taken a variety of forms. The following individuals have participated as external members of study teams:

Sir R. Barratt
Mr. R. Benton
Sir J. Blelloch
Lieutenant General (Rtd.) Sir D. Boorman
Mr. C. Brendish
Mr. M. Dow
Mr. D. Dugdale
Professor M. Earl
Mr. F. Everard
Mr. B. Greedy
Mr. N. Hale
Mr. D. Hart
Mr. B. King
Mr. C. Littmoden
Mr. A. Mallin
Mr. I. McNeil
Mr. J. Montgomery
Mr. I. Robertson
Professor I. Shanks
Mr. K. Simpson
Major General (Rtd.) G. Sinclair

A team from Price Waterhouse, which was already providing consultancy advice in a related area, also participated in one of the studies.

Not all those listed are receiving payment for their services. Remuneration arrangements for individuals acting as external advisers or consultants are matters of confidence between the Department and the persons concerned.

Armed Forces Pay Review Body

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the pay rises for senior defence officers arising from the Armed Forces Pay Review Body's recommendations.

Mr. Hanley: The Armed Forces Pay Review Body recommended in February an increase of 4·4 per cent. for brigadiers and equivalents—the most senior rank on whose pay it makes recommendations. The Government accepted this recommendation in full but, in line with all other service ranks whose pay is recommended by the AFPRB, the award for brigadiers and equivalents was staged. The first 2·7 per cent. of the award will be paid from 1 April 1994 with the balance being paid from 1 January 1995.

Officers on whose pay the Government receive recommendations from the Senior Salaries Review Body will receive an increase of 2·75 per cent. from 1 April 1994, together with the third stage of their 1992 award. Additionally, the Government are considering a recommendation by the SSRB that a differential of 10 per cent. should be established between the pay of brigadiers and equivalents and major generals and equivalents.

Underground Property

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the bunkers and other underground property owned, operated or leased by his Department.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Bosnia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent Greek military leaders are party to any NATO decisions on action on Bosnia; and what assessment he has made as to the security considerations of this involvement.

Mr. Hanley: Greece is a full party to all NATO decisions on Bosnia.

Nuclear Testing

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his policy on nuclear testing.

Mr. Hanley: I have nothing to add to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, on 22 March, *Official Report*, column *139*.

War Disablement Pensions

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to deal with the backlog of claims for war disablement pensions following the closure of the Ministry of Defence records centre at Hayes.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answers I gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Davidson) on 21 April, *Official Report*, column *624*.

Greek War Medals

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a list of those ex-soldiers who are entitled to accept the Greek War Medal and the War Star from the Greek Government for their part in the 1940-41 campaign.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is not held centrally, and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Front Line Capabilities

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the extent to which decisions emerging from the defence costs study will have an effect upon front-line capabilities.

Mr. Hanley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has not yet taken any decisions on the defence costs study. Furthermore, no decisions will be taken on the recommendations arising from this work which will reduce our operational capability.

Estimates Statement

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the mistakes and misprints that have been made in the 1994 "Statement on the Defence Estimates"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: As far as I am aware, the only misprint of any material nature is in annex E. The upper part of the bar for the USA should be shaded blue to denote nuclear-powered submarines rather than yellow.

"Soldier" Magazine

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information the new parliamentary column in "Soldier" magazine will include; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The parliamentary column, which was introduced in the 7 March 1994 issue of "Soldier" magazine, contains a brief digest of Defence matters, published in *Hansard*, which "Soldier's" editor considers will be of interest to his readership. The column will reflect information which affects Army personnel, their dependants, and the ex-service community.

Capital Works

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 25 April, *Official Report*, column *86*, if he will give details of the design developments for the Minley/Chatham, Dishforth and Tidworth capital works projects.

Mr. Hanley: An element of refinement will nearly always occur between the inception of a project and its final completion, largely as a result of detailed work by professional design staff. There were, however, no significant changes to the original scope of work envisaged to meet the requirements of the three projects in question. The main reason for the reductions in costs was due to the competitive market conditions prevailing at the time.

Homosexuality Regulations

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 22 April, *Official Report*, column *711*, what effect the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, if enacted, would have on the new homosexuality regulations.

Mr. Hanley: The provisions of the new tri-service guidelines on homosexuality are consistent with the current provisions of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 3 May 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Civil Servants (Business Appointments)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many civil servants in his Department applied in each year since 1986, through the business appointments system to take up an outside appointment *(a)* as an independent consultant, *(b)* with a firm of consultants and *(c)* in other employment; how many were referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments; and how many were granted.

Mr. John M. Taylor: For staff below grade 5 the Department has received one application through the business appointments system. The application was made in 1994 under *(c)* other employment, and was not referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments. Information on staff at grade 5 and above could not be collected in the time available.

Justices' Clerks

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list all the judicial functions of justices' clerks.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Although justices' clerks are not judges, they do, however, perform certain functions of justices which have been devolved to them by virtue of section 28(1) of the Justices of the Peace Act 1979. These functions are contained in the Justices' Clerks Rules 1970, as amended, the Magistrates' Courts (Attachment of Earnings) Rules 1971, the Family Proceedings Courts (Children Act 1989) Rules 1991, and the Family Proceedings Courts (Matrimonial Proceedings etc.) Rules 1991.

Court Cases

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will publish a table showing the number of *(a)* civil actions and *(b)* criminal prosecutions using the powers of (i) the Insolvency Acts, (ii) the Theft Acts and (iii) the Banking Acts in each of the last four years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: *(a)* civil actions. This information is not available for the Insolvency Acts and Theft Acts and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The number of civil actions carried out by the Bank of England using the powers of the Banking Acts were as follows:

Year to end of February

	Civil actions
1991	7
1992	5
1993	2
1994	1

(b) criminal prosecutions: Defendants proceeded against under the Insolvency Acts and Theft Acts will be prosecuted under the indictable offence categories of robbery, burglary, theft and handling stolen goods and fraud and forgery and the summary offence categories of stealing and unauthorised takings. Information on the number of prosecutions by type of offence is published annually in the Home Office publication "Criminal Statistics England and Wales Supplementary tables, Volume 1 Proceedings in Magistrates' Courts". Copies of the publication for 1989 to 1992—latest available—are held in the Library.

The number of criminal prosecutions carried out by the Bank of England using the powers of the Banking Acts were as follows:

Year to end of February

	Criminal prosecutions
1991	0
1992	2
1993	1
1994	2

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Terrace (Journalists' Access)

Mr. McWilliam: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee when the minutes of the proceedings of his Committee dealing with access of journalists to the Terrace will be available.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: The minutes of proceedings of the Administration Committee are produced periodically. The volume containing the decision taken up to the Easter recess is expected to be available on 9 May—HC 374-i to ix.

Upper Waiting Hall (Exhibitions)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee in what circumstances applications of right hon. and hon. Members to use the Upper Waiting Hall for exhibitions are not decided by ballot: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: Applications for exhibitions of a parliamentary nature to be exempted from the ballot are considered individually by the Administration Committee.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Civil Servant (Business Appointments)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many civil servants in his Department applied in each year since 1986 through the business appointments system to take up an outside appointment *(a)* as an independent consultant, *(b)* with a firm of consultants and *(c)* in other employment; how many were referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments; and how many were granted.

Mr. Howard: The following table sets out the information requested.

Number of applications

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994[1]
Number of applicants	2	12	2	3	4	2	5	7	—
Independent consultant									
Total	—	3	1	1	—	1	1	4	—
Reference to advisory committee	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Approved unconditionally	—	2	1	1	—	1	1	4	—
Approved with conditions	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Firm of consultants									
Total	—	1	—	1	2	1*	1	1	—
Reference to advisory committee	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Unconditional	—	1	—	1	2	1	1	—	—
Conditional	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Other employment									
Total	2	8	1	1	2	—	3	2	—
Reference of advisory committee	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Unconditional	2	5	1	—	2	—	2	2	—
Conditional	—	3	—	1	—	—	1	—	—

[1] To 31 March.

Prisons Ombudsman

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the total cost involved in appointing the prisons ombudsman since the post was readvertised in November 1993; and how this sum is broken down;

(2) how prisoners will be informed of their rights to complain to the prisons ombudsman and of the procedures involved;

(3) what will be the procedure to be followed by prisoners wishing to make complaints to the prisons ombudsman; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what budget is to be allocated to the office of the prisons ombudsman for the year 1994-95; and how this is broken down;

(5) How many *(a)* men and *(b)* women applied for the post of prisons ombudsman, following its readvertisement in November 1993; how many (i) men and (ii) women were shortlisted; and how many (1) men and (2) women were interviewed for the post.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The total cost of appointing the prisons ombudsman since the post was readvertised in November 1993 was £55,200. This sum consists of a £20,332 fee for the services of an executive search agency, £20,086 for the Civil Service Commission's Recruitment and Assessment Services and £14,781 for advertisements placed in the national press.

Prisoners will be informed of their rights to complain to the prisons ombudsman through a revised Prison Service leaflet on requests and complaints, the next reissue of the prisoners' information pack and any means the prisons ombudsman may decide appropriate. The procedures to be followed by prisoners are set out in the document "The Prisons Ombudsman : A Note on Arrangements", a copy of which is available in the Library.

For 1994-95 the allocated budgets are £462,000 for salaries, £15,000 for travel and subsistence, and £400,000 for the costs of establishing and operating the office.

There were 352 male and 50 female applicants for the post of prison ombudsman. Six candidates, all male, were shortlisted and interviewed.

Leon Paterson

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received a report from the Police Complaints Authority concerning the death of Leon Paterson in Stockport police station.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No. Any report is entirely a matter for the Crown Prosecution Service, the chief constable and the Police Complaints Authority.

ANZAC Day

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the change in the arrangements this year for the use of Whitehall by vehicular traffic during the ANZAC day ceremony.

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration was given to closing Whitehall to vehicular traffic during the ANZAC day ceremony on 25 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes were made in the arrangements for vehicular traffic in Whitehall during the Cenotaph ceremony on ANZAC day, 25 April, as compared with previous years; what consultations there were about the changes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave to a question from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 28 April, at column *244-45*.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many parliamentary questions, in the period November 1992 to March 1993, were answered with the response that the information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost; and how many were referred on to an agency chief executive.

Mr. Howard: The number of answers given to questions to my Department in the period November 1992 to March 1993 which the POLIS database has been able to identify as fitting the hon. Member's criteria is 72. During

the same period, the POLIS database has been able to identify seven questions to my Department where agency chief executives were asked to arrange for replies to be given.

Prisons (Drug Abuse)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many different types of drugs have been found in each Her Majesty's prison, Her Majesty's remand centre and Her Majesty's detention centre in *(a)* South Yorkshire, *(b)* North Yorkshire, *(c)* West Yorkshire and *(d)* Humberside in each year since 1989;

(2) how many visitors have been found in possession of illegal drugs at each Her Majesty's prison, Her Majesty's remand centre and Her Majesty's detention centre in *(a)* South Yorkshire, *(b)* North Yorkshire, *(c)* West Yorkshire, and *(d)* Humberside in each year since 1989; and what subsequent action was taken against them;

(3) if he will list by Her Majesty's prison and Her Majesty's remand or detention centre in *(a)* South Yorkshire, *(b)* North Yorkshire, *(c)* West Yorkshire and *(d)* Humberside, how many incidents of drug abuse were discovered in each year since 1989 to date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 3 May 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Questions about the number of different types of drugs found; the number of visitors who have been found in possession of illegal drugs and the number of incidents of drug abuse in each prison, remand centre and detention centre in *(a)* South Yorkshire, *(b)* North Yorkshire, *(c)* West Yorkshire and *(d)* Humberside in each year since 1989;

Information about these incidents is readily available since 25 September 1990 only.

The tables attached provide information on drug finds including drugs finds on visitors.

Apart from the information given in the attached table and adjudications statistics, information about the number of incidents of drug abuse is not recorded centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Different types of drugs found in each prison

Establishment	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
South Yorkshire				
Lindholme				
Cannabis	11	37	36	29
Cannabis Plant	1	1	5	5
Cocaine	0	2	0	0
LSD	0	2	3	0
Heroin	0	0	3	4
Amphetamines	0	0	2	5
Barbiturates	0	0	0	1
Other	0	5	8	5
Moorland				
Cannabis	0	21	76	101
Cannabis Plant	0	2	2	4
Cocaine	0	0	3	1
LSD	0	0	1	2
Amphetamines	0	0	1	2
Other	0	0	0	5
Hatfield				
Cannabis	1	4	4	6
North Yorkshire				
Full Sutton				
Cannabis	0	6	4	16
Cannabis Plant	0	0	1	2
Cocaine	0	0	2	1
Heroin	0	0	1	3
Amphetamines	0	0	0	1
Other	0	0	2	3
Askham Grange				
Cannabis Plant	0	1	0	0
Cocaine	0	0	1	0
Amphetamines	0	0	0	1
Other	0	0	1	0
Northallerton				
Cannabis	1	2	4	4
Cannabis Plant	0	0	0	1
LSD	0	1	0	0
West Yorkshire				
Northallerton				
Cannabis	0	8	1	3
Cannabis Plant	0	0	0	1
Heroin	0	0	0	2
Other	0	0	2	0
Thorp Arch				
Cannabis	4	0	0	0
Wetherby				
Cannabis	0	7	1	3
Leeds				
Cannabis	2	2	2	7
Heroin	0	0	1	1
New Hall				
Cannabis	12	5	3	3
Cocaine	0	4	0	1
LSD	0	0	0	1
Heroin	1	0	2	0
Other	0	0	2	0
Wakefield				
Cannabis	0	6	3	10
Cannabis Plant	0	0	0	1
Cocaine	0	0	1	0
Humberside				
Everthorpe				
Cannabis	2	5	4	4
Heroin	0	0	0	1
Hull				
Cannabis	9	4	13	16
Cannabis Plant	0	0	0	2
Heroin	0	0	2	2
Amphetamines	0	0	0	1
Barbiturates	1	0	0	0
Other	0	0	2	0
The Wolds				
Cannabis	0	0	9	51
Cannabis Plant	0	0	0	2
Heroin	0	0	0	5
Amphetamines	0	0	0	3
Other	0	0	5	3

Number of visitors found with, or suspected of possessing, illegal drugs

Establishment	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
South Yorkshire				
Lindholme	0	2	1	0
Moorland	0	0	6	3
Hatfield	0	0	0	0
North Yorkshire				
Full Sutton	0	2	2	6
Askham Grange	0	0	0	0
Northallerton	0	0	1	0
West Yorkshire				
Rudgate	1	0	0	0
Thorp Arch	0	0	0	0
Wetherby	0	0	0	0
Leeds	0	0	2	0
New Hall	0	0	1	0
Wakefield	0	0	0	2
Humberside				
Everthorpe	0	0	0	0
Hull	4	0	3	0
The Wolds	0	0	1	13

All cases were reported to the local police.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans he has to allocate sniffer dogs to each prison to help combat the problem of illegal drugs; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans he has to ensure sniffer dogs inspect all prisons on a regular basis throughout the year to help combat the problem of illegal drugs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Simon Burns, dated 3 May 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Questions about allocating sniffer dogs to each prison and ensuring sniffer dogs inspect prisons on a regular basis to help combat the problem of illegal drugs.

There are no plans to allocate dogs trained to search out drugs to each prison. At present, 68 dogs (almost all of which are also guard dogs) in the Prison Service have been trained to detect illegal drugs. This figure will rise to 76 by mid-May when the current training course is completed. These dogs can be used at any prison where a Governor wants a drug search undertaken. It is for individual Governors to determine the extent to which drug trained dogs are used in their establishments. In the nine months from April to December establishments. In the nine months from April to December 1993, 459 drug searches were undertaken by the Prison Service drug dogs.

In addition to these dogs, we have started to train other dogs for allocation to prisons that do not routinely have guard dogs. These dogs will work solely on drug searching and will be allocated to prisons where Governors have requested them.

Humberside Police

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will refer back to the Local Government Commission proposals to split Humberside police with an instruction to consult the police, the police authority and the public.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have nothing to add to the answers I gave to the hon. Member and to the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) on 21 April, at columns *1021-22.*

Incident (Shaftesbury Avenue)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement in respect of the operation in which armed Metropolitan police officers were at the scene of an incident on 16 April at approximately 1015 hours, at the northern end of Shaftesbury avenue, London.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the Commissioner that the Metropolitan police have no record of any incident or police operation in Shaftesbury avenue on 16 April, and that no authority for the issue of firearms in the Metropolitan police district was given on that day.

Operation Barnard

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what considerations led to the title Operation Barnard; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the Commissioner of the Metropolitan police that "Operation Barnard" was a name chosen by the local divisional commander.

Passport Office

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans his Department has to expand the network of United Kingdom passport offices, with particular reference to Scotland.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the United Kingdom Passport Agency. I have asked the chief executive to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from John Hayzelden to Mr. Brian Donohoe, dated 29 April 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question about expanding the network of United Kingdom Passport Offices.

As you may know, the UK Passport Agency has offices at Belfast, Glasgow, Liverpool, London, Newport and Peterborough. We plan to conduct a review of the number and location of Passport Offices later this year. In this review we shall give careful consideration to the position in Scotland.

TREASURY

Taxation (Relief and Allowances)

Mr. Gill: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated cost of the relief and allowances against *(a)* inheritance tax and *(b)* capital gains tax in the current financial year.

Mr. Nelson: The cost of the inheritance tax nil rate band for transfers not exceeding £150,000 in 1994-95 is estimated to be £4·4 billion. This figure is particularly tentative and subject to a wide margin of error.

Estimates of the costs of other reliefs and allowances against capital gains tax and inheritance tax for 1994-95

could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, estimates for 1993-94 were published in table 1·6 and in appendix B of an Inland Revenue publication "Inland Revenue Statistics 1993". A copy of this was placed in the Library. Updated figures for 1994-95 will be published later in the year.

Nationalised Industries

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were *(a)* the tax revenues received from, *(b)* the subsidy provided to and *(c)* the net cost or revenue of the nationalised industries in each of the five years to 1979.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is not available in the format requested. However, the total external financing provided for the nationalised industries in the years 1975-76 through to 1978-79 was as follows:

Total external financing

	£ million[1]
1975-76	4,756
1976-77	3,275
1977-78	1,822
1978-79	2,367

[1] 1980 survey prices.

Taken as a whole, there was no net revenue from the nationalised industries in these years.

Privatisation

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total profit made by formerly publicly-owned companies in the five years prior to their privatisation; and if he will provide a breakdown of this sum by company.

Mr. Dorrell: The table shows the profits made, or estimated to have been made, by privatised companies in the five years prior to privatisation where this information is held centrally and can be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Profits[1] of privatised companies while in the public sector

£ million

Company	Year of privatisation	Pre-tax profit prior to privatisation: 5 years prior	4 years prior	3 years prior	2 years prior	Final year in public sector
British Aerospace	1981	—	—	—	50·3	52·8
Cable and Wireless	1981	—	—	59·4	61·0	64·1
Amersham International	1982	—	—	6·0	4·0	4·8
NFC	1982	—	—	—	—	4·3
Britoil	1982	—	—	—	294·0	423·1
Associated British Ports	1983	—	22·4	11·5	−10·3	5·5
International Aeradio	1983	—	—	—	—	13·3
Enterprise Oil	1984	—	—	—	—	[2]83·2
Jaguar	1984	—	−47·3	−31·7	9·6	50·0
Sealink	1984	—	—	—	—	12·8
BT	1984	424·0	570·0	936·0	1031·0	990·0
MacBrayne Haulage	1985	—	—	—	—	0·1
British Gas[3]	1986	430·0	803·0	918·0	723·0	800·0
British Airways	1987	−108·0	74·0	185·0	191·0	195·0
Royal Ordnance	1987	—	—	—	26·0	29·0
Rolls-Royce	1987	—	−115·0	26·0	81·0	120·0
BAA[3]	1987	—	84·0	104·0	119·0	122·0
British Steel[3]	1988	−229·0	−378·0	42·0	177·0	419·0
Harland and Wolff	1989	−35·8	−37·1	−75·6	−25·1	−28·8
Short Brothers	1989	0·5	−37·2	−19·9	−142·5	−353·7
Anglian Water	1989	21·1	37·4	52·2	58·7	73·4
Northumbrian Water	1989	0·1	3·0	7·1	10·8	10·1
North West Water	1989	−26·0	−6·9	8·9	25·3	44·3
Severn Trent	1989	−17·8	39·0	52·0	96·6	97·5
Southern Water	1989	22·0	36·9	47·3	59·3	65·1
South West Water	1989	20·6	23·9	28·1	33·5	38·1
Thames Water	1989	99·4	144·1	151·1	180·7	207·2
Welsh Water	1989	−12·8	−3·5	11·9	16·4	24·9
Wessex Water	1989	9·9	15·0	21·5	25·0	24·1
Yorkshire Water	1989	18·4	22·2	37·0	56·7	55·7
Eastern Electricity	1990	88·0	100·5	99·9	119·0	124·4
East Midlands Electricity	1990	48·2	70·9	81·9	87·0	90·9
London Electricity	1990	84·7	95·6	96·2	112·7	126·2
Manweb	1990	26·9	33·1	28·5	39·5	37·7
Midlands Electricity	1990	64·5	68·2	62·0	76·6	88·9
Northern Electric	1900	48·1	48·7	47·1	58·0	66·1
Norweb	1990	53·9	59·5	53·3	65·8	71·7
Seeboard	1990	47·6	57·7	44·0	58·0	57·6
Southern Electric	1990	69·2	92·5	79·4	113·8	128·2
South Wales Electricity	1990	24·9	31·6	21·0	30·8	26·2
South Western Electricity	1990	47·6	45·6	32·2	55·8	66·1
Yorkshire Electricity	1990	55·3	64·5	71·8	90·2	109·5
National Grid	1990	—	—	—	—	428·6
National Power	1991	—	—	—	—	178·0
PowerGen	1991	—	—	—	—	233·6

Company	Year of privatisation	Pre-tax profit prior to privatisation: 5 years prior	4 years prior	3 years prior	2 years prior	Final year in public sector
Scottish Hydro-Electric	1991	—	—	—	—	60·3
Scottish Power	1991	—	—	—	—	144·7
Medway Ports	1992	—	—	—	—	3·8
Forth Ports	1992	—	—	5·7	9·9	8·2
Northern Ireland Electricity	1993	—	—	40·1	15·0	64·1

[1] Historic Cost convention unless otherwise stated.
[2] Nine months' figures only.
[3] Current Cost convention.

NHS Estate

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much each valuation office received from the relevant regional health authorities for valuation of surplus NHS properties for each year since 1987.

Mr. Nelson: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Valuation List

Ms Eagle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average length of time between the receipt of a proposal to alter the valuation list and the decision on the proposal for each district valuation officer.

Mr. Nelson: This information is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Council Tax

Mr. Burden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many council tax cases were awaiting inspection and discussion at the Valuation Office at 1 April.

Mr. Nelson: The number of appeals received during the initial banding period in England and Wales and outstanding as at 31 March 1994 was 614,000. The number awaiting inspection and discussion could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Tax Relief

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what he estimates to be the total cost in 1994-95 of relief from inheritance tax for *(a)* agricultural property, *(b)* business property, *(c)* heritage property and maintenance funds and *(d)* exemption of transfers to charities on death.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 28 April 1994]:* Provisional estimates for the total cost of reliefs and exemptions from inheritance tax for 1994-95 are:

	£ million
Relief for agricultural property	80
Relief for business property	60
Relief for heritage property and maintenance funds	90[1,2]
Exemption of transfers to charities on death	220[2]

[1] The estimated annual cost of exemptions and reliefs from inheritance tax for heritage property shows significant fluctuations from year to year. The figure given here is the average annual cost over the past decade.
[2] These figures are particularly tentative and subject to a wide margin of error.

Executive Share Option Schemes

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Inland Revenue approved executive share option schemes currently exist; what proportion are linked to approved savings-related share option schemes; and what are the respective values of both schemes.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* Up to 31 March 1994, 5,680 discretionary—executive—share option schemes had been approved by the Inland Revenue; 3,981 of these schemes are believed to be currently in operation. In 1991-93, the latest year for which relevant figures are available, some 2 per cent. of discretionary schemes were granted options at a discount, under the linkage provisions introduced in the Finance Act 1991, because they also had an approved savings-related share option scheme. The total initial value of shares over which options were granted in 1992-93 under approved discretionary share option schemes was £1·6 billion; the corresponding figure for approved savings-related share option schemes is £1·88 billion.

Corporation Tax

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the effect on corporation tax receipts in 1994-95 and 1995-96 of the introduction of pay and file.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* The introduction of pay and file is not expected to have a significant effect on total receipts of corporation tax in 1994-95 and 1995-96.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Civil Servants (Business Appointments)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Attorney-General how many civil servants in his Departments applied in each year since 1986 through the business appointments system to take up an outside appointment *(a)* as an independent consultant, *(b)* in a firm of consultants and *(c)* in other employment; how many were referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments; and how many were granted.

The Attorney-General: Since 1986 two applications have been received by the Crown Prosecution Service under the business appointments rules, one in 1990 and one in 1992. Neither related to an appointment as a consultant or with a firm of consultants. One of the applications required and obtained the approval of the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments. The other application was approved by the Department. There have

been no such applications in the Legal Secretariat to the Law Officers, the Treasury Solicitor's Department or the Serious Fraud Office.

PRIME MINISTER

Libya

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he has had with the UN about sanctions against Libya.

The Prime Minister: Ministers and officials are in regular contact on the question of the Lockerbie bombing and sanctions against Libya, both with the United Nations secretariat and other members of the Security Council. I last discussed this matter with the United Nations Secretary-General during his visit to London in July 1992.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 3 May.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 3 May.

The Prime Minister: This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Sir Tim Bell

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Prime Minister if the contract to Sir Tim Bell to advise on the celebrations and commemorations of the D-day landings was awarded by means of a competitive tender.

The Prime Minister: Yes.

Public Bodies

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Prime Minister what changes there have been since 28 November 1991 in the definition of executive duties carried out by chairmen or vice-chairmen of a political party which would disqualify that person from holding a similar role or office in any public body; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: None.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Expo '92

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 10 February, *Official Report*, column *389*, what were the final costs of his Department's contribution to Expo '92, including the costs of settlement with Joanna Bickerton Associates.

Mr. Needham: The final costs have yet to be settled. I will write to the hon. Member when they are.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the names of consultants employed in reviews of structure and organisation for each of his Department's laboratories and agencies since April 1992, the periods of the appointments and the date of their reports; and whether the reports have been placed in the Library, together with the total sums expended on the reviews of such laboratories and agencies in the financial years 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Heseltine: The position on the use of consultants in connection with the reviews of the DTI laboratories and other agencies is as follows:

DTI Laboratories

A study by KPMG of the National Physical Laboratory, the National Engineering Laboratory, the Laboratory of the Government Chemist, the National Weights and Measures Laboratory and the Warren Spring Laboratory[1] was commissioned in May 1993. KPMG's report was presented to the Department in December 1993. A summary of the Report was placed in the Libraries of both Houses on 14 April 1994.

[1]Warren Spring Laboratory was subsequently removed from the KPMG study. PA Consulting were then appointed to conduct a short review of the planned relocation of WSL from Stevenage to new premises at Welwyn Garden City. PA's report was presented to the Department in June 1993. A copy of the Report was placed in the Libraries of both Houses on 7 July 1993.

Other Agencies

Accounts Services Agency

A study by PA Consulting was commissioned in October 1993. The study was completed by January 1994 and an announcement in the form of Written Answer was made to the House on 11 February 1994, *Official Report*, column 505.

PA's report has not been placed in the House as it contains commercially sensitive information, the publication of which could be damaging to the Agency.

Companies House

A study by SRU was commissioned in October 1992. The study was completed in August 1993.

SRU's report has not been placed in the House as the future of Companies House remains under consideration.

Insolvency Service

Stoy Hayward were appointed in August 1993 to conduct a pre-feasibility study into the potential for making more use of the private sector in the work of the Official Receiver. Stoy Hayward's report was presented to the Department in October 1993. A summary of the Report was placed in the Libraries of both Houses on 7 February 1994.

Following the pre-feasibility study, a further more detailed feasibility study was commissioned from Stoy Hayward in March 1994. Stoy Hayward are due to complete this "second phase" study by the end of July 1994.

Patent Office

A study by Price Waterhouse was commissioned in July 1993. Price Waterhouse have completed the bulk of their work and a final report is due in the near future.

Radiocommunications Agency

As announced in a Written Answer on 22 March 1994, Official Report, column 216 the possibility of a greater role for the private sector in planning the radio spectrum and assigning frequencies, and the redefinition of the future role of the Radiocommunications Agency are matters on which comments are sought in the recently pulished consultative document, "The Future Management of the Radio Spectrum". Accordingly, consultants have not so far been employed to review the structure or organisation of the Agency.

The consultative document has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Costs

The sums expended on work by consultants in connection with the reviews of the laboratories and agencies in the last two complete financial years total £101,041 (including VAT) for 1992/93 and £935,359 (including VAT) for 1993/94.

Export Licences

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many individual export licences were awarded to cover the £6,000 million of defence exports in 1993, to which preference is made at paragraph 442 of the statement of the Defence Estimates 1944, Cm 2550.

Mr. Heseltine: The sum of £6,000 million refers to the value of contracts placed with the United Kingdom in 1993 and not to the value of exports.

In 1993 there were issued 10,635 individual export licences in respect of all goods prefixed "ML"—munitions list—in the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1992, as amended. Not all these licences relate to exports in 1993 as licences are valid for two years. The issue of a licence does not necessarily lead to an export being made.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answers to the hon. Members for Blaenau Gwent on 8 March, *Official Report*, column *204* and for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), of 31 March, *Official Report*, column *1012*, if he will now make it his policy to organise the central record keeping of public interest immunity certificates.

Mr. Heseltine: I have now made arrangements for a separate record to be kept in the Solicitor's Office of all public interest immunity certificates signed by or on behalf of myself or any of the other Ministers in the Department.

Pirate Radio Stations

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has concerning the number of pirate radio stations which currently broadcast on a regular basis in the United Kingdom; and what assessment he has made of the impact of those illegal broadcasts on the future development of community radio.

Mr. McLoughlin: There is no regular pattern to pirate radio broadcasts, but the Department's Radiocommunications Agency made 611 raids on pirate stations in 1993. The agency will sustain its efforts against pirates so as to prevent radio interference and maintain fair competition for all legal broadcasters.

Music Recording Industry

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the contribution of the music recording industry to the United Kingdom economy.

Mr. Sainsbury: The United Kingdom has a large and internationally important recorded music industry which makes a substantial contribution to the economy through both product sales and royalty earnings.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Fortress Study Group

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what help and assistance his Department is giving to the fortress study group in its "Defence of Britain" survey; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: My Department is currently considering an application from the Council for British Archaeology, on behalf of the fortress study group, for a contribution towards funding this project.

Community Radio

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what information he has concerning those FM frequencies which are to be reserved by the Radio Authority to provide for the future development of community radio.

Mr. Brooke: It is for the Radio Authority to determine how to use the new FM frequencies, in the band 105-108 MHz, which become available from the end of 1995. I understand no decisions have yet been taken.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what plans he has to encourage the development of community radio; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement about the extent to which the Radio Authority is seeking to encourage franchise bids from community radio broadcasters.

Mr. Brooke: The priorities and procedures for developing the independent radio sector, including community radio, are determined by the Radio Authority; the Government do not seek to influence the authority's judgment.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what recent representations he has received concerning community radio; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Following the publication of the Radio Authority's consultation document on the "Future Use of 105-108MHz", I have received a number of letters from both hon. Members and members of the public in support of community radio and other forms of radio services. I have explained that it is for the Radio Authority to determine how best to use the new frequencies for the development of independent radio.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he last met the Community Radio Association to discuss the future of community radio; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I have not met the association, but officials keep in touch with its representatives.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement setting out his policies for the future management of the radio spectrum; and if he will indicate specifically which elements of the spectrum will be utilised to facilitate the development of community radio.

Mr. Brooke: The Government's policy is to increase diversity and choice for listeners and to promote competition in the provision of services.

The Government are allocating further FM spectrum, from 105 MHz to 108 MHz, to the Radio Authority from the end of 1995, or earlier if possible. It is for the Radio Authority to decide the use of this spectrum and it has issued a consultation document to seek views on this.

The Government are also preparing for the introduction of digital audio broadcasting. The National DAB Forum brings together interested parties, including the Community Radio Association.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what information he has concerning the number of *(a)* hospital radio stations, *(b)* community radio groups, *(c)* student radio stations and *(d)* radio stations catering for the inmates of institutions for young offenders which currently broadcast in the United Kingdom; and what projections he has made of the growth of broadcasters in each of those categories over the next 10 years;

(2) what information he has concerning the number of restricted service licences which have been awarded since 1990 by the Radio Authority for experimental broadcasts by community groups; and how many of those licensees have subsequently been granted full franchises to broadcast as community radio stations.

Mr. Brooke: I suggest the hon. Member asks the Radio Authority for this information, since it is responsible for licensing services.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) whether the proposal for the nationwide introduction of community radio contained in the 1987 Green Paper "Radio: Choices and Opportunities", Cm 92, remains the policy of Her Majesty's Government; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether the indication in the Green Paper on "Radio: Choices and Opportunities", Cm 92, on the possible number of community radio stations remains the policy of his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Green Paper was a consultative document. In the subsequent White Paper, and during the passage of the Broadcasting Act 1990, the Government took the view that community radio did not need to be distinguished from other independent radio services. It is for the Radio Authority to determine its priorities and procedures for developing the independent radio sector in accordance with requirements of the Broadcasting Act.

Civil Servants (Business Appointments)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many civil servants in his Department have applied through the business appointments system to take up an outside appointment *(a)* as an independent consultant, *(b)* in a firm of consultants and *(c)* in other employment; how many have been referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments; and how many were granted.

Mr. Sproat: The Department of National Heritage has been in existence only since April 1992. To date no civil servants in the Department have applied through the business appointments system to take up appointments outside the Department.

Museums and Galleries (Attendance)

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 18 April, *Official Report*, column *388*, what changes have been made in the timetable for the availability of figures for the actual attendance at national museums and galleries since April 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat: I provided provisional attendance figures for 1993-94 in my reply of 14 February at column *578*. The actual attendance figures are now being collected on a financial year basis and we hope to make them available in July.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Narmada Dam

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received about the recent functioning of the Narmada dam in India and the consequences for international funding and the local people.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have seen reports about the recent closure of the sluice gates, but we are not aware of any consequences for international funding. We understand that the Indian authorities are examining the resettlement aspects connected with this action.

Consultancies

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 29 March, *Official Report*, column *615*, what have been *(a)* the number and *(b)* the value of management consultancies awarded under the aid programme.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* The number of contracts awarded to management consultants under the aid programme for 1992-93 was 38 and the total value £10,602,735. The consultants concerned have been engaged at the request of overseas Governments to provide a wide range of advice and expertise which cannot be funded from their own resources.

Commonwealth Development Corporation

Mr. Fabricant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the role of the Commonwealth Development Corporation.

Mr. Hurd: The Government's response to the report on the Commonwealth Development Corporation by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission was reported to the House on 25 March 1993, *Official Report*, columns *653-54*. A quinquennial review of CDC has also been completed. Copies of the review report have been placed in the Library of the House. The Government have endorsed its conclusions and recommendations.

CDC makes an important and distinctive contribution to Britain's overseas development programme. Its primary role is to promote productive investment in the private sector and to support privatisation programmes. It will continue to concentrate its new investments on the poorest countries, where financial markets are undeveloped and private sector capital is still scarce. Its strong asset base and returns from previous investments now allow it to finance future growth in new investments at a lower cost to the British aid programme. In 1993, CDC's investments and commitments increased to over £1·6 billion; £217 million of gross new investments were made, an increase of 24 per cent. on 1992. Over the next five years, a rising level of

internally generated resources, and a limited programme of other borrowing on concessional terms, starting with a £25 million loan approved by the European Investment bank on 22 March 1994; is expected to allow further increases in the annual level of investment.

As previously announced, the Government have decided to retain CDC in the public sector. As a consequence, no fundamental changes are proposed in CDC's capital structure at present. However, to allow for the planned expansion of activities the Government intend, subject to parliamentary time, to legislate to increase the ceiling on CDC's outstanding borrowing power. It is also proposed that new legislation should include powers to enable the Government to waive interest payable by CDC on aid programme loans. As an interim measure from 1 April 1994 the Government have reduced the interest rate on these loans to 0·75 per cent.

The Government have agreed new targets with CDC. At least 70 per cent. of board approvals for new investments each year will be in the poorest countries. CDC will focus on countries which are important to Britain, and at least 80 per cent. of board approvals for new investments each year should be for private sector projects. CDC will aim to invest the remainder only in support of privatisation strategy. This continues the significant shift in emphasis from public to private sector investment which CDC has been pursuing for some years. The Government also intend to consider with CDC how best to associate its work more closely with other aspects of the British aid programme.

By 1996, 25 per cent. of approvals should be in the form of equity or quasi-equity; and CDC's catalytic role in attracting additional private foreign investment and local capital should be enhanced.

The target rate of return on capital employed will be 8 per cent. nominal for the next two to three years and will be reviewed thereafter. CDC's administrative efficiency, which is praised by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, will continue to be further improved. For 1994, the ratio of gross operating costs to year end investments and commitments will be 1·15 per cent. A review of this target for later years is to be completed before the end of 1994.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Agency

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest estimate of the annual total of maintenance payments resulting from assessments made by the Child Support Agency in the financial year 1993-94.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Donald Dewar, dated 29 April 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the latest estimate for the annual total of maintenance payments resulting from assessments made by the Child Support Agency in the financial year 1993-94.

End year figures will be available in due course on the total amount of assessed maintenance. The Agency is unable to make an estimate in the light of recent policy changes.

I am sorry I cannot be more helpful.

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will breakdown the building schemes included in the sums to be spent by the Child Support Agency in 1994-95 on minor new works on furniture and fittings as listed in the estimates, class XIII, vote 4, section F3(1) and (3);

(2) if he will break down the sum spent on minor new works furniture and fittings, and £602,000 on major new works by the Child Support Agency in 1993-94 as listed in the estimates, class XIII, vote 4, section F3;

(3) if he will list and give details of the expenditure by the Child Support Agency on *(a)* computer equipment, *(b)* telecommunications and *(c)* office machinery in the years 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. George Mudie, dated 29 April 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the costs of works and equipment in the Child Support Agency (CSA).

You have asked for a breakdown of the building schemes to be included in the estimates for the year 1994-95. These are shown in the attached annex. Additionally, in 1992-93, the CSA spent £368,000 on office machinery.

Details of the CSA's expenditure on furniture and fittings, office machinery, and major and minor works carried out in the year 1993-94 are in the course of preparation.

You have also asked for the expenditure on computer equipment and telecommunications. The CSA obtains computer services, including the provision of telecommunications equipment, via the Information Technology Services Agency (ITSA), another Agency of the DSS.

As much of the information technology equipment, and many of the systems, are shared by the various Agencies of the Department, it is not possible to separately identify that which applies to the CSA. New charging arrangements throughout the Department will make this possible in future.

In respect of the 1992-93 financial year, the planned capital expenditure by ITSA to provide the required services for CSA was £17·61 million on computers and £3·18 million on telecommunications. The planned capital expenditure by the ITSA in respect of CSA for 1993-94 was £3·85 million on computers and £1·2 million on telecommunications.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Annex

Project	*Projected cost (£)*
Additional expenditure to create space in child support agency centres (CSACs)	831,000
Accommodation expenditure arising from increasing CSA activity	1,595,000
Maintenance of the estate	850,000
Maintenance of CSA HQ	106,000
Further adaptation of CSACs	171,000
Ongoing furniture requirements	181,000

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total expenditure of the CSA in *(a)* 1992-93, when it was operating as a shadow agency and *(b)* 1993-94; and what is the estimated total expenditure in 1994-95.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. George Mudie, dated 29 April 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the expenditure of the Child Support Agency.

During the year of the shadow Agency in 1992-93, the total expenditure was £146 million.

For 1993-94, total expenditure has been estimated at £117 million.

For 1994-95, total expenditure is estimated at £154 million.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the CSA business plan for the current year will be printed and made available to hon. Members.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. George Mudie, dated 29 April 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the Business Plan of the Child Support Agency for 1994.

The Agency aims to publish the Business Plan by the end of June 1994. Copies will be placed in the Library of the House and distributed to all Members of Parliament.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects the CSA to complete all straightforward assessments within the original target times of between six to 12 weeks.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. George Mudie, dated 29 April 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking when the Child Support Agency will be able to complete all straightforward assessments within 6 to 12 weeks.

The aim of clearing such cases in 6 to 12 weeks was first expressed before the Agency had experience to live operation. In practice, the assessment process has turned out to be more complex and clearance times longer than was originally expected.

At this stage it is still too early to predict what clearance times will be achieved in the longer term, although the Agency is working hard to ensure that all applications for maintenance are cleared as quickly as possible.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is the Child Support Agency's target for benefit savings for 1994-95; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if the Child Support Agency achieved its target for benefit savings for 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Targets for 1994-95, including the benefit savings target, are still being finalised, drawing on the experience of the first year of live running.

The final figure for 1993-94 is not yet available, but it is not expected that the Child Support Agency will have achieved its benefit savings target.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security at what age children are no longer eligible for child support from the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: Child support legislation applies to all children aged under 16. It also applies to those aged 16, 17 or 18 who are receiving full-time education up to GCE A-level or equivalent standard or are registered for work or youth training, providing they are not entitled to claim income support and have never married.

Unemployment Benefit

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out for each year since 1991 for *(a)* Cleveland and *(b)* Great Britain (i) how many women aged over 60 years (1) claimed and (2) received unemployment benefit, (ii) how many women received the equivalent to the standard retirement pension, (iii) what was their average weekly award and (iv) how many men between the ages of 60 and 65 years (A) claimed and (B) received unemployment benefit.

Mr. Hague: The only information available on unemployed claimants aged over 60 and in receipt of unemployment benefit is in relation to Great Britain and is included in issues of the "Half Yearly Analysis of Unemployed Claimants", copies of which are in the Library.

Civil Servants (Business Appointments)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many civil servants in his Department applied in each year since July 1988 through the business appointments system to take up an outside appointment *(a)* as an independent consultant, *(b)* with a firm of consultants and *(c)* in other employment; how many were referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments; and how many were granted.

Mr. Hague: Twenty-three applications have been made under the business appointment rules since 1988. The details are in the table:

Year	*Applications*	*Independent consultant*	*Firm of consultants*	*Other*	*Referred to Committee*
1988	10	1	2	7	9
1989	7	0	2	5	3
1990	3	0	2	1	1
1991	2	0	1	1	1
1992	0	0	0	0	0
1993	0	0	0	0	0
1994	1	0	0	1	0

Note: No applications failed but restrictions were placed on activities in two cases.

War Widows

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he or any of his ministerial colleagues have had from the War Widows' Association of Great Britain in regard to pensions paid to the widows of New Zealand service men; what reply was given; what action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: On 12 April, my noble Friend Lord Astor met a deputation from the War Widows Association of Great Britain. One of the subjects discussed was the level of war widows pension paid by the New Zealand Government to the widows of New Zealand service men. The association is seeking supplementation of the New Zealand pension to bring it up to the preferential level of pension awarded to United Kingdom war widows. The matter is under consideration.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out in pound sterling terms the pensions paid to war widows in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Australia, *(c)* Canada, *(d)* Japan, *(e)* France and *(f)* Germany.

Mr. Hague: Comparisons of war widows pensions are complicated as the total pension may depend on factors such as the age of the widow, the rank of the deceased ex-service man, his level of disablement or earnings potential and whether means-testing applies.

A summary of the information available is as follows —in the main, 1993 rates apply. Rates have been converted into sterling taking account of cost-of-living differences:—

Country	*Weekly pension*
United Kingdom	The basic weekly pension is £72·90. In addition most widows receive an age addition, and a special payment of £47·84 a week from the Ministry of Defence. A war widow aged 70 would receive a tax free weekly war widows pension totalling £136·84.
Australia	The weekly pension is £79·27. In addition a domestic allowance of £5·66 is payable. The total weekly pension is £84·93.
Canada	The maximum weekly pension is £138·43 (a lower pension would be received if the late husband's disability was assessed as less than 48 per cent.)
Japan	The basic weekly pension is £118·97.
France	The basic weekly pension is £67·99.
Germany	The weekly pension is £43·45. In addition, allowances may be received in respect of loss of earnings (maximum 1992 rate was £82·29), standard of living (maximum 1992 rate was £46·58 week) and for attendance (maximum 1992 rate was £19·26 week). The first two allowances are means-tested.

Pensions

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review the percentage which old age pension levels bear to average earnings and restore the link between the two.

Mr. Hague: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the old age pensioners' organisations from which he has recently received representations regarding the present levels of pensions.

Mr. Hague: Since January this year, I have received representations on the level of pensions from the Craigmillar Heart to Heart Self Support Group; the Bedford Community Retirement Group; the Mid-Devon Tenants' Group Cullompton Area Committee; the Pensioners' Rights Campaign and United Pensioners.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consultations he has had with pensioners' groups regarding present levels of old age pensions.

Mr. Hague: I have had no such consultations recently.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review the relationship between pensions and the cost of living; and what assessment he has made of the operation of the linkage between the two in 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Hague: I have no plans for a review of this sort. Retirement pension has maintained its value against increases in the cost of living throughout this Government's term of office. This April, the retirement pension uprating included an additional element, above the increase in the retail prices index, for extra help with the cost of VAT on fuel.

Pensioners (Water Charges)

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will bring forward proposals for further compensation for pensioners for the increases in water charges and value added tax.

Mr. Hague: The exceptional package of measures to help pensioners and others with VAT on domestic fuel will include further help from April 1995. Variations in the cost of other items in the household budget will be reflected in the indices on which the annual uprating of benefits is based.

Disabled Living Allowance

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims for disabled living allowance were referred to disability appeal tribunals in the year to 31 March; and how many have been allowed.

Mr. Scott: In the period specified, 32,427 disability living allowance claims were submitted to disability appeal tribunals. Of the 19,260 appeals decided during the year, 7,240 were allowed.

Source: Disability Living Allowance management information system—100 per cent. count of cases.

Benefits Agency

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the cost of expanding the Benefits Agency medical service following the introduction of the incapacity for work benefit.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the form requested. We estimate that the changes announced in the

Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill will add some £40 million per year to the Department's administrative costs for 1995-96 and 1996-97 and £10 million per year from 1997-98.

Incapacity for Work Benefit

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the members of the committee of 80 experts involved in drawing up the scoring system to be used in the assessment of claims for incapacity for work benefit.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) on 20 January at column *802*.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Civil Servants (Business Appointments)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many civil servants in his Department applied in each year since 1986 through the business employment system to take up an outside appointment *(a)* as an independent consultant, *(b)* with a firm of consultants and *(c)* in other employment; how many were referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments; and how many were granted.

Mr. Goodlad: The information requested by the hon. Member is as follows:

1986: *(a)* 0; *(b)* 0; *(c)* 18.
Six applications were referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments and all were granted.
1987: *(a)* 0; *(b)* 0; *(c)* 15.
11 applications were referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments and all were granted.
1988: *(a)* 1; *(b)* 0; *(c)* 21.
18 applications were referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments and all were granted.
1989: *(a)* 2; *(b)* 0; *(c)* 19.
15 applications were referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments and all were granted.
1990: *(a)* 1; *(b)* 1; *(c)* 0.
Two applications were referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments and both were granted.
1991: *(a)* 2; *(b)* 0; *(c)* 28.
25 applications were referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments and all were granted.
1992: *(a)* 2; *(b)* 0; *(c)* 20.
15 applications were referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments and all were granted.
1993: *(a)* 0; *(b)* 0; *(c)* 34.
22 applications were referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments and all were granted.
1994: *(a)* 0; *(b)* 0; *(c)* 2.
Two applications were referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments and both have been granted.

Bosnia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what limitations the Greek Government have placed on the involvement of their land, sea and air forces in NATO activity in Bosnia.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There are no NATO land operations in Bosnia. Greek ships participate in NATO operations in the Adriatic, except those in Serbian/Montenegran territorial waters. The Greeks have withdrawn permission for the use of Prevlaka air base for AWACS operations over the former Yugoslavia, and have withdrawn their crews from these operations.

Serif Avsar

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information his Department has received regarding the arrest of Serif Avsar by Turkish security forces on 22 April in Diyarbakir; what representations he has made to the Turkish Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We are aware of reports of the detention of Serif Avsar. Our embassy in Ankara has asked the Turkish authorities for further information.

Mozambique

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made with disarmament and demobilisation in Mozambique.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[pursuant to his reply, 26 April 1994, c. 122]:* Our latest information is that 75 per cent of the Government forces have assembled in UN-monitored cantonment areas.

EMPLOYMENT

European Social Fund

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 15 April, *Official Report*, column *342*, if he will supply the information about ESF funding and its inter-relationship with the funding of youth training and training for work schemes in the form that is available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short) on 3 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *822*.

European Funding

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what agreement has been reached between his Department and the European Commission with regard to an objective 4 plan for the United Kingdom in the period 1994 to 1999.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Following the EC Commission's announcement on 19 January 1994 that the Great Britain allocation under European social fund objectives 3 and 4 for 1994 to 1999 would be 3,377 million ecu, the Government decided that the entire allocation should be used for the foreseeable future on objective 3 to help the unemployed, as it had been agreed by Council and Commission that member states would be free to decide on the allocation of funding between the two objectives. The decision was announced on 25 January 1994 in a response to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald), *Official Report*, column *223*. There is, therefore, no need for a plan for objective 4 for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the obstacles in the negotiations with the European Commission in the finalisation of the United Kingdom's objective 3 budget and operation for 1994 to 1999; and when he expects those difficulties to be overcome.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The United Kingdom objective 3 plan was submitted in early November 1993. The European Commission opened formal negotiations on 27 April 1994. It is too early to say what obstacles will emerge, or how soon the negotiations can be concluded, although the United Kingdom has consistently pressed for speedy progress and will continue to do so.

Job Clubs

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the workings of the payment by results contract for job clubs.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. John Spellar, dated 3 May 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about Jobclub payment by results contracts.

The payment by results approach to Jobclub contracting has shown that it represents good value for money. It encourages our contractors to think more about the results to be achieved and to improve their effectiveness at helping members to find jobs.

Payment by results contracts are divided into two parts. There is a fixed payment element which usually represents 75% of the total contract price. The bonus element, which represents the remaining 25% of the contract price, is divided between the number of job placings agreed in the contract. Payment of both the fixed and bonus element of the contract is made monthly in arrears.

It is explained to contractors that a bonus payment will only be made where a member has left to take up work and we have satisfactory written confirmation of their placing. Payments can be made in cases where a member leaves the Jobclub to take up temporary work. However, we will not pay a bonus for the same person more than twice during their membership. Part of our role in monitoring the programme is to check a percentage of all claims for bonus payments to ensure there is no abuse of the system.

At the end of 1993/94 there were 782 payment by results Jobclub contracts in operation. This represents 54% of the total number of Jobclubs. Payment by results contracts are one way of making our programme contracting as efficient and effective as possible. We plan to introduce further measures into our programmes with the aim of ensuring the unemployed people who join them receive the best possible help.

I hope this is helpful.

Urban Policy Initiatives

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list every urban policy initiative that has been instituted or operated since 1979, the date that each scheme began operating, where appropriate the date that the scheme ceased operating and the funds available on an annual basis under each scheme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Employment Department assistance has since 1979 been targeted on unemployed people—especially long-term unemployed people—wherever they are. However, in 1989 inner-city compacts were established—an initiative which is now part of the single regeneration budget. Details are shown in the following table:

Inner city compacts—England

	Expenditure £ million	*Number of compacts*
Outturn		
1989-90	3·0	25
1990-91	5·5	38
1991-92	5·5	48
1992-93[1]	4·85	50
Estimated outturn		
1993-94[1]	4·7	50

[1] Figures exclude Compacts which were set up from 1992-93 outside inner cities.

In addition, since the creation of the Employment Service as an executive agency in 1990 its annual performance agreement has included a target for a percentage of placings to be of unemployed inner city residents. To help meet this target the ES allocates additional staff resources —inner-city officers.

WALES

Disabled People (Employment)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table indicating for each local authority in Wales *(a)* the number of registered disabled people whom it employs, *(b)* the percentage this represents of its work force and *(c)* how many disabled people each authority should have employed to meet the quota established under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Acts of 1944 and 1958.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information about the quota position of individual employers is treated as confidential and is not disclosed without the agreement of the employers concerned. Local authorities in Wales are among a wide range of public sector employers who have agreed to specific information about their employment of registered disabled people being published in the *Employment Gazette*. The information which is published in accordance with this agreement is the number of registered disabled people employed and the percentage that this represents of the employer's total work force. The latest information, which relates to 1 June 1992, was published in the April 1993 *Employment Gazette*, a copy of which is in the Library of the House. Information relating to 1 June 1993 will be published as soon as possible.

Air Pollution Monitors

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what considerations underlay the siting of environmental air pollution monitors in the pedestrianised area of Frederick street, Cardiff, to register kerb-side emission of diesel and lead from vehicles; what estimate he has made as to the suitability of this site; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The monitoring station at Frederick street, Cardiff is part of the Government's enhanced urban air quality monitoring network. This was established to provide information on levels of urban air pollution to which large numbers of people are exposed and, hence, does not necessarily involve kerbside monitoring.

A copy of the siting criteria for the network, and which the Cardiff station meets, has been placed in the Library of the House.

Blood

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales to what extent Wales has been self-sufficient in blood supplies in each of the past five years; and how any surplus has been used or any deficit been met, indicating in his answer the blood groups concerned.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information for the area covered by the Welsh National Blood Transfusion Service—south and mid Wales only—is set out in the following tables.

National Blood Transfusion Service (Wales)
Usable blood collected

	Units of blood by group								
	O POS	A POS	B POS	AB POS	O NEG	A NEG	B NEG	AB NEG	Total
1993-94									
Issued to Welsh hospitals	34,547	31,091	5,844	1,161	8,920	7,468	1,665	465	91,161
Exported to other RTCs[1]	2,254	729	136	0	525	52	0	1	3,697
Time expired[2]	4	483	1,621	1,370	15	179	34	243	3,949
1992-93									
Issued to Welsh hospitals	34,114	30,701	5,771	1,146	8,808	7,374	1,644	459	90,017
Exported to other RTCs[1]	2,064	668	125	0	481	48	0	1	3,387
Time expired[2]	2	284	952	804	9	105	20	143	2,319
1991-92									
Issued to Welsh hospitals	32,360	29,919	6,381	1,519	7,807	6,757	1,583	542	86,868
Exported to other RTCs[1]	1,253	470	109	0	642	95	0	0	2,569
Time expired[2]	2,445	1,616	890	958	377	435	36	153	6,910
1990-91									
Issued to Welsh hospitals	31,621	28,208	6,193	2,088	7,296	6,510	1,458	562	83,936
Exported to other RTCs[1]	2,811	2,241	0	0	306	770	0	0	6,128
Time expired[2]	6	0	2,804	1,514	24	18	18	139	4,523
1989-90									
Issued to Welsh hospitals	31,109	27,752	6,093	2,054	7,178	6,405	1,434	553	82,578
Exported to other RTCs[1]	485	306	20	0	146	52	20	0	1,029
Time expired[2]	1	0	465	251	4	3	3	23	750
Blood Imports to Welsh hospitals									
1993-94	105	0	0	0	138	0	10	0	253
1992-93	172	0	0	0	226	0	16	0	414
1991-92	150	0	0	0	85	0	0	0	235
1990-91	47	0	0	0	28	0	0	0	75
1989-90	690	550	0	0	75	189	0	0	1,504

[1] Regional Transfusion Centres.
[2] Time expired blood is destroyed.

Training

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many training weeks were undertaken by each training and enterprise council in Wales in 1990-91.

Mr. Redwood: The information requested is provided in the table.

Training weeks provided by TECs in Wales 1990-91

TEC	*Youth training*	*Employment training*	*Total*
Gwent	22,315	13,898	36,213
Mid Glamorgan	132,735	67,795	200,530
North East Wales	60,439	22,981	83,420
Targed	17,561	9,211	26,772
Powys	n/a	n/a	n/a
South Glamorgan	11,446	13,787	25,233
West Wales	144,973	128,644	273,617

Source: TEC Invoices.
Note.—Powys TEC became operational on 1 April 1991.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has in respect of trunk road agencies and passenger transport authorities after local government reorganisation.

Mr. Redwood: I propose to appoint a maximum of eight agents on a geographical basis to manage the maintenance of the trunk road and motorway network. I would like transition committees to agree by 31 December 1994 which new unitary authority in each geographical area should be appointed. The geographical areas should be similar to but not necessarily the same as existing highway authority boundaries and should relate to boundaries of the new unitary authorities. I would consider proposals for fewer than eight agencies were they to be presented to me.

In any area where it is not possible for agreement to be reached, I will decide which authority should be appointed, taking account of any representations I have received.

On reorganisation each unitary authority would become responsible for the delivery of socially necessary public

transport services and local transport planning. These duties include the need to consult neighbouring authorities about policy and service delivery.

I believe there is considerable scope for co-operation between authorities and that benefits are greatest when things are done on a voluntary basis. I do not see a need for the extra bureaucracy which statutory passenger transport authorities would create.

Civil Servants (Business Appointments)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many civil servants in his Department applied in each year since 1986, through the business appointments system to take up an outside appointment *(a)* as an independent consultant, *(b)* with a firm of consultants and *(c)* in other employment; how many were referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments; and how many were granted.

Mr. Redwood: The following statistics are available:

Number of civil servants applying to take up outside appointments

Year	Independent consultants	Consultancy firms	Other
1990	—	2	2
1991	—	1	2
1992	—	1	1
1993	—	1	—
1993 (to April)	—	1	—

None of these were referred to the Advisory Committee.

Information covering the years 1986 to 1989 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Transitional Committees

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether his office took legal advice before writing to local authorities on 14 April regarding the composition of transitional committees; if he will now withdraw the letter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The letter of 14 April set out my Department's understanding of the effect of clause 46 of the Local Government (Wales) Bill as it would apply to the composition of transition committees. It was issued in response to requests for clarification from authorities and, in accordance with the usual practice, was based on legal advice. The Standing Committee considering the Local Government (Wales) Bill will have the opportunity shortly to debate all issues relating to transition committees.

Farm Incomes

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will now make it his policy to reinstate to levels prior to the recent cuts the hill livestock compensatory allowances in the less-favoured areas in Wales; what account he has taken of the effect on farmers' income of the recent adverse weather conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* The rates of hill livestock compensatory allowances are reviewed annually during the course of the autumn review of economic conditions in the hills and uplands. Any effects on farm incomes caused by the weather will be taken into account in the review later this year.

Lamb Losses

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to issue immediately the final instalment of the annual ewe premium to those sheep producers in Wales who have been affected by exceptional losses of lambs due to extreme weather during the 1994 lambing season; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* I am arranging for payments of the final instalment to be made as soon as possible.

GP Fundholders

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from the Association of Community Health Councils with respect to the availability of services to the patients of general practitioner fundholders, including the availability of hospital consultants for out-patient appointments at health centres and general practitioners' surgeries, what consultations he has had in relation to the clinical evaluation of such services; what proposals he has to extend the availability of any such services as are deemed clinically worthwhile to the patients of non-fundholding general practitioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* I have not yet seen the paper prepared by the Association of Community Health Councils. When I have, I will consider what it has to say.

It is for health authorities and GP fundholders to evaluate the costs and benefits of the services they secure for patients, including the initiatives that some of them have taken to improve access by arranging for a number of consultant clinics to be held in local health centres and GP surgeries.

Inward Investment

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) of 25 April, *Official Report,* column 4, what proportion of the 400 jobs corresponding to the £10 million new investment at TRW Steering Systems will be *(a)* new and *(b)* safeguarded.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* The TRW steering systems project will safeguard 414 jobs in Resolven Neath. The investment itself will be a boost for local employers who supply and service the company.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) of 25 April, *Official Report,* column 4, (1) what proportion of the 14,000 jobs generated by inward investment arise from firms that are new to Wales; and how many are *(a)* new or *(b)* safeguarded;

(2) if he will break down the totals for inward investment from *(a)* the rest of the United Kingdom, *(b)* northern America, *(c)* the far east and *(d)* rest of Europe as to (i) new and (ii) safeguarded jobs.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* The information requested is as follows:

	New Jobs	Safeguarded Jobs
United Kingdom	4,207	3,348
North America	560	1,610
Far East	2,342	241
Rest of Europe	972	657
Total	8,081	5,856

Information on whether companies are new to Wales is not collected centrally. However, of the total jobs recorded in 1993-94, 27 per cent. related to new projects as opposed to expansions, acquisitions and joint ventures.

The figures are based on information given by the relevant companies at the time of their decision to invest and take no account of subsequent developments.

Wheelchair Repairs

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 26 April, *Official Report*, column *139*, on what date the wheelchair repair contract eventually won by SERCO was advertised in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the supplement to the Official Journal of the European Union; and what details it gave in relation to the provision of (i) direct services of repair and (ii) general facilities management.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* The Welsh Health Common Services Authority advertised the wheelchair repair and maintenance contract in the United Kingdom on 8 July 1993 and in the *European Journal* on 6 July 1993.

The advertisement invited interest from organisations to bid for the contract to repair and maintain wheelchairs with delivery into 37,000 users' homes in Wales. Firms which expressed an interest were sent a more detailed specification. I will write and send a copy to the hon. Member.

Press Releases

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to introduce electronic mail or multi-fax for despatch at press releases, including the despatch of press releases to the Library simultaneously with their despatch to the press.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 25 April, at column *58*. Distribution by both electronic mail and multi-fax is kept under review.

ENVIRONMENT

Air Monitoring

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he ensures responsibility for co-ordinating air monitoring in respect of European directive EC 85/203 and World Health Organisation air safety levels; and at what cost, including equipment and staffing costs.

Mr. Atkins: The monitoring of nitrogen dioxide for the purposes of European directive EC 85/203 is undertaken by the National Environment Technology Centre on behalf of the Government, and the results are reported to the Commission. The results of monitoring at all Department of the Environment automatic air pollution monitoring sites, including the nitrogen dioxide directive sites, are published annually by the National Environment Technology Centre. The annual reports include an analysis of exceedences of European Community and World Health Organisation guidelines and standards.

The annual running cost of a nitrogen dioxide directive monitoring site, which may include measurements of other pollutants, is in the order of £25,000. The capital cost of establishing an automatic nitrogen dioxide monitoring site is about £30,000.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he co-ordinates air monitoring with local authorities.

Mr. Atkins: My Department has a successful history of co-operation with local authorities on air pollution monitoring. For example, smoke and sulphur dioxide, using non-automatic techniques, are monitored at some 250 sites by 151 local authorities, with central Government providing the central co-ordination and quality assurance and quality control. The national nitrogen dioxide diffusion tube survey established in 1993, in which nitrogen dioxide is being monitored at more than 1,200 sites by some 300 local authorities, is run on similar lines.

In order to build on this co-operation the Government recently published a consultation paper, "The Future of Air Quality Monitoring Networks in the United Kingdom", in which proposals were made to develop a framework which draws local and national automatic air quality monitoring together into a coherent quality assured network. The Government are currently considering responses to the proposals in that paper.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has made to the report of the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology entitled "Breathing in our Cities"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Government are fully aware of the growing links between air pollution and health, not least from its own advisory group. We have made clear our intention to publish proposals later this year for a strategy to improve the quality of air in the United Kingdom, after widespread consultation. To this end, the Government have issued a discussion paper entitled "Improving Air Quality" which discusses the options available and invites comment from all interested organisations and individuals. Copies of this paper have been placed in the Library.

Vacant Housing

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest estimates of housing property remaining vacant; how much of this is owned by *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* the private sector and *(c)* Government Departments for each local authority in England; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Local authorities in England report the numbers of their own dwellings that are vacant at 1 April on their annual HIP1 return. Details for individual local authorities are available from the "1993 HIP1 All

Items Print", a copy of which is in the Library; columns A71 and A76 gives figures for vacant dwellings inside and outside the authority's area, respectively.

Housing associations report the numbers of their own dwellings vacant at 31 March on their annual HAR10/1 return. I have today placed in the Library a table giving the reported numbers of vacant housing association dwellings in each local authority area. The figures are incomplete as there are around 900 vacant dwellings—3 per cent. of vacant dwellings—for which an analysis by district is not available.

In addition to providing information on those of their own dwellings that are vacant, local authorities are also asked to provide estimates of the number of private sector and other public sector vacant dwellings in their area on their annual housing investment programme returns. The reported information for each local authority is given in columns A74 and A73 respectively of the "1993 HIP1 All Items Print".

There are doubts about the quality of some of the estimates provided by authorities. Information from the 1991 English house condition survey suggests that the England total for the private sector may be an over-estimate, and data from central Government Departments on their own vacant dwellings, for which no geographical breakdown is readily available, indicate that there is under-reporting of public sector vacant dwellings.

House Building

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans his Department has to revitalise the construction industry to ensure an increase in the permanent dwellings started in 1994 in *(a)* council housing, *(b)* housing association and *(c)* the private sector; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The construction industry will continue to benefit from the range of Government policies which are leading to a sustained economic recovery. These have brought about substantial falls in interest rates leading to more affordable home ownership. The industry also benefits from our approach of bringing in private sector resources to increase the output from our social housing programmes.

My Department's public expenditure plans for housing are contained in its 1994 annual report—Cm 2507.

Aluminium Recycling Industry

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the effect of imports on the aluminium recycling industry.

Mr. Atkins: United Kingdom imports of primary aluminium in 1992 and 1993 increased from 341,700 tonnes to 581,300 tonnes respectively. At the same time, the United Kingdom aluminium recycling industry increased its production from 251,800 to 274,400 tonnes. It is encouraging to note that increased imports of primary aluminium have not prevented an increase in the level of aluminium recycling in the United Kingdom.

Latham Report

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the Latham report to be published.

Sir George Young: Sir Michael Latham's final report of the joint Government/industry review of procurement and contracting arrangements in the United Kingdom construction industry will be published on Monday 18 July this year. Copies of the report will be placed in the House Library. Publication of the report will be followed by a conference organised by the industry groups involved in the review on Monday 25 July 1994 at the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre.

Regional Office Staff

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many of the staff in each of the integrated regional offices are *(a)* black people, *(b)* Asian and *(c)* female; and what percentages these are of the total.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 26 April 1994]:* The information requested is as follows.

Total numbers of Black, Asian and female staff in the Government offices for the regions

Region	*Total staff*	*Female*	*Percentage*	*Black*	*Percentage*	*Asian*	*Percentage*
NE	310·0	211	58	0	0	*	less than 5
NW	460·4	194	42	9	2	*	less than 5
Y and H	315·5	151	48	*	less than 5	7	2
M	72·2	53	73	0	0	0	0
WM	364·9	191	52	29	8	7	2
EM	260·3	127	49	*	less than 5	*	less than 5
E	198·15	88	44	*	less than 5	*	less than 5
L	251·0	95	38	29	12	28	11
SE	295·2	149	50	7	2	7	2
SW	223·5	99	44	*	less than 5	*	less than 5
Total	2,751·2	1,358	49	74	approx. 24	49	approx. 18

General notes:
All figures calculated on a headcount basis.
Figures exclude casual and industrial staff.
Black and Asian staff figures include only those who responded to a voluntary survey and do not include other ethnic minorities.
DOE, ED and DOT figures for Asian and Black staff are as at 1 October 1993.
DTI figures for Black and Asian staff are as at January 1994.
All figures for female staff are as at April 1994.
Total staff figures are based on those of 1 October 1993.
Following the code of practice on ethnic origin of individuals, where the totals are 5 or less, actual figures have been replaced by an asterisk.

DTI notes:
Figures for London region are included in those for the South East region.
Merseyside figures are included in those for the North West.

Employment Department notes:
Merseyside figures are included in those for the North West.
Due to reorganisation, figures for Merseyside are still being finalised. Gender breakdown of the 30 staff involved is not yet known.
This breakdown by ethnicity and grade is a new retrieval for the ED system. This has reduced the ethnic origin figure by 3 staff who identified themselves as black.

Homelessness

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people who have previously been housed by local authorities as homeless applicants are currently homeless.

Sir George Young: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many families rehoused last year by London boroughs had lost their homes as a result of repossessions by lenders;

(2) what percentage of families who were made homeless last year through repossessions are currently living in temporary accommodation.

Sir George Young: Data provided by local authorities on the numbers of homeless households for which they accept responsibility to secure permanent accommodation include information on the reason for the loss of their last settled home. Some 1,730 households were accepted in London, and 8 per cent. of acceptances in England, in 1993 as a result of mortgage arrears; cases where the mortgage arrears led to repossession are not separately identified.

These data do not provide information on the number of accepted households who were subsequently placed in temporary accommodation, or on the point when households are permanently rehoused.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the level of support provided to the long-term homeless after they are housed.

Sir George Young: Long-term homeless people who are rehoused under the homelessness legislation—part III of the Housing Act 1985—are entitled to the same social security benefits as other comparable members of the population.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many families subsequently rehoused in housing association accommodation in the last available year had previously lost their houses as a result of repossession by lenders.

Sir George Young: The information requested is not available centrally.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of families accepted as homeless in each year since 1990 have had members of their families subsequently taken into care.

Sir George Young: The information requested is not available in the Department.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the economic causes of homelessness.

Sir George Young: During the 12 months ending 31 December 1993, only about 10 per cent. of households accepted by English local authorities for rehousing under the homelessness legislation had lost their previous home for reasons of mortgage or rent arrears.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has concerning the ages of those currently living rough in London.

Sir George Young: Counts of people sleeping rough in central London are undertaken periodically by voluntary sector agencies and co-ordinated by Homeless Network. The latest count, on 18 November 1993, found 287 people sleeping rough. The breakdown by age is shown in the table:

Age range	*Per cent.*
Under 18	1
18 – 25	16
26 – 49	49
50 – 59	22
Over 60	12
Total	100

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average cost of keeping a family of four in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in London for one year; and what is the comparable cost of housing a homeless family in a council-owned dwelling.

Sir George Young: The information requested is not available.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Simon Huges: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much land set aside for public housing has been developed by the London Docklands development corporation in each of the last 10 years; and what amount was set aside for commercial development over the same period.

Sir George Young: The London Docklands development corporation does not set aside land for particular uses. Disposals of land over the last 10 years are as follows:

Year	*Public housing (acres)*	*Commercial (acres)*
1984	3·1	8·7
1985	2·9	21·7
1986	9·5	160·1
1987	6·8	64·5
1988	3·8	19·3
1989	17·0	20·5
1990	26·1	11·2
1991	13·4	19·1
1992	5·0	32·9
1993	12·9	4·6
Total	100·5	362·6

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new units of housing in London docklands have been *(a)* given planning permission and *(b)* built, since the LDDC was formed; and how many people accepted by the London boroughs of Newham, Southwark and Tower Hamlets as homeless have been housed in these developments.

Sir George Young: *(a)* the number of new units given planning permission is 22,874; *(b)* the number of new units built since 1981 is 17,460.

Nominations to new dwellings built within London docklands are subject to arrangements agreed between housing associations, local authorities and the Housing Corporation. The LDDC does not have access to information as to whether the lettings are to households accepted as homeless by the boroughs.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much LDDC land remains undeveloped; and what percentage of this undeveloped land is set aside for public housing in *(a)* Newham, *(b)* Southwark and *(c)* Tower Hamlets.

Sir George Young: A total of 465 acres of land remain undeveloped at 1 April 1994.

It has not been the LDDC's practice to distinguish between land for public or private housing in setting aside land for residential purposes.

Boat Dwellers

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many registered boat dwellers there are in the United Kingdom *(a)* currently and *(b)* 10 years ago; and whether this figure is expected to increase.

Sir George Young: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to bring forward legislation to provide boat dwellers with long-term security of tenure.

Sir George Young: We have no plans to introduce legislation providing statutory security of tenure for houseboat dwellers. Their rights will depend on the terms of any agreement with the landlord of the mooring.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to extend the tenants charter to boat dwellers.

Sir George Young: The tenants charter applies only to those resident in council-owned property. While we would encourage the development of good practice, it is for the owners and operators of moorings to consider whether to follow the Government's citizens charter route in developng their service standards for boat dwellers.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with his ministerial counterpart in Norway concerning THORP; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: No such discussions have taken place.

Fire Precautions (Government Departments)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what were the results of the cost-benefit analysis his Department has carried out to assess the relative costs and benefits of central provision of advice and training to all Government Departments on fire precautions compared with employing consultants to provide comparable advice and training;

(2) if it is his intention to end his Department's provision of free advice and training to other Departments on fire precautions and standards;

(3) what consultation process was followed between his Department and other Government Departments over the intention to withdraw from them the advice and training at present provided by the Department of Environment fire branch.

Mr. Baldry: My Department will continue to provide central guidance on fire protection standards for Government buildings and on procedures for the management of fire safety. But individual Departments are responsible for protecting the buildings which they occupy against fire hazards. They are best placed to decide on the most cost-effective means of obtaining advice about measures to be adopted in particular buildings and about training, whether from in-house staff or consultants. It is therefore appropriate that they should in future take on these responsibilities. Departments were advised on 25 April of the proposed changes; and invited to contribute their views to a review to be carried out on how best to provide my Department's continuing services.

Water Pollution, Worcester

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to co-ordinate the investigation and eventual reports into the pollution of water supplies in the Worcester area, now being conducted by the drinking water inspectorate, the National Rivers Authority, Severn-Trent Water plc, the West Midlands regional health authority and Worcester and district health authority.

Mr. Atkins: We shall ensure that, taking into account the investigations that the various bodies concerned have in hand, the incident is fully and thoroughly investigated.

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the pollutants which reached consumers' water supplies in the Worcester area on 15 April.

Mr. Atkins: On 29 April, Severn Trent Water Ltd. in a communication to the drinking water inspectorate, reported the contaminants as 2-ethyl-4-methyl-1, 3-dioxolane and 2-ethyl-5, 5-dimethyl-1, 3-dioxane.

The drinking water inspectorate, as part of its investigation, is requiring Severn Trent Water Ltd. to provide full data from its analysis of samples of drinking water supplies taken in association with the incident. The inspectorate will be checking the validity of the methods of analysis used.

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the role of the Director General of the Office of Water Supplies in relation to the water pollution incident at Worcester on 15 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The director general has no role in the immediate investigation of the incident. He may, however, consider in conjunction with the customer service committee, whether the company responded adequately to the needs of its customers, particularly the elderly and the disabled, during the incident and whether appropriate levels of compensation have been offered.

Vitalscheme Ltd

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the licensing procedures followed by Shropshire county council when they authorised the operation of Vitalscheme Ltd. in Wem, Shropshire.

Mr. Atkins: Shropshire county council granted a waste disposal licence under part I of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 to Vitalscheme Ltd. on 28 February 1994. That Act and regulations made under it prescribe the procedures to be followed in granting such licences. Further information on the licence may be obtained from Shropshire county council.

Drinking Water

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to reduce the chlorine levels present in drinking water.

Mr. Atkins: Chlorine is used to disinfect drinking water, and to provide continuing protection in water distribution. There is no evidence that levels used by water companies in England and Wales are excessive, and my right hon. Friend has no plans to require reduced levels to be used.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration is given to quality and technical competence when contracts are being considered for former sections of the Property Services Agency.

Mr. Curry: Client departments are responsible for considering quality and technical competence standards when selecting contractors for tender lists in relation to any contract they let, whether or not one of the privatised PSAS businesses is involved.

Local Government Commission

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many final reviews have been issued by his Local Government Commission to date; how many initial reports have been issued; how many are in course of preparation.

Mr. Curry: The Local Government Commission has published final reports on 10 shire counties, but has been asked to conduct further reviews of three of them. The commission will be publishing draft reports on these and the other 29 shire counties under review during the summer. Final reports on all areas are due to be with the Secretary of State by the end of 1994.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to implement the final reports of the Local Government Commission he has received so far; and if he will make a statement on the powers to be employed with particular reference to the extent to which proposals for different areas will be dealt with together.

Mr. Curry: Changes to local government structure will be implemented by statutory order, subject to affirmative resolution in both Houses. We have made an order establishing a unitary structure on the Isle of Wight from 1 April 1995. We expect that orders for other areas where there is to be change will be laid by summer 1995 and reorganisation will be completed by 1 April 1997. Orders may be laid and debated together, depending on progress; we shall decide on handling at the time, taking into account the pressure of parliamentary business.

Housing (Green Paper)

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many responses were received by his Department to the Green Paper on access to local authority and housing association tenancies; which representations have not been included in this total and for what reasons; and what was the previous highest number of responses to one of his Department's Green Papers.

Sir George Young: The total of all responses received is now over 9,500. As I said in my answer to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) on 12 April, *Official Report*, column *133*, the Department has on occasion received substantially more representations on other matters of widespread interest.

Water Charges

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue a direction to the Director General of Water Services that he should invite views from national, regional and local consumers' organisations and from hon. Members in the course of the current review of water charging limits for water companies in England and Wales.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 28 April 1994]:* The Secretary of State does not intend to issue such a direction.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the bodies and individuals whose views have been formally invited in the course of the current review of water charging limits for water companies in England and Wales.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 28 April 1994]:* The Director General of Water Services, Mr. Ian Byatt, is responsible for the current periodic review of water charge limits. He began the process of consultation in July 1991 by publishing a consultation paper on the "Cost of Capital". Since then, Mr. Byatt has published a series of further papers in connection with the review, on which a wide range of bodies and individuals, including consumers' organisations and hon. Members, have been invited to express their views. The director general also asked all water companies to consult their customers widely through the publication of market plans.

Birds

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has had with the Countryside Councils for Wales, Scotland and Northern

Ireland and English Nature with respect to an agreed management plan United Kingdom-wide for the protection of the habitats of the redshank and dunlin; and if he will supply such a plan to the Environment Commissioner of the European Union.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 25 April, *Official Report*, column 39.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 25 April, *Official Report*, columns *40-1*, if he will list those organisations which favoured the changes to the bird registration system he has now proposed.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* The following organisations fully or partly supported the proposed changes:

Avian Incubation Research
The Game Conservancy Trust
Brent Lodge Bird and Wildlife Trust
Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre
Birmingham City Council
Wold Austringers' and Falconry Centre
BCM Environmental Services Ltd
The Hawk Board
TRAFFIC International
British Federation of Bird Importers
New Forest Falconry Club
Hawk and Owl Trust
Bird Aid and Wildlife Rescue
Association of Chief Police Officers
National Association of Private Animal Keepers
Raptor Breeders Association
London Borough of Croydon
Royal County of Berkshire
London Borough of Hounslow
The Borough of Oswestry
International Wild Waterfowl Association
Kilmarnock and Loudon District Council
Reading Borough Council

In earlier consultations, the following organisations had also supported the deregistration proposals:

British School of Falconry
National Council for Aviculture
British Waterfowl Association

Council Tax

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy that council tax at the full rate be levied on all holiday homes.

Mr. Curry: No.

Water Quality

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to impose a requirement on water companies to improve water quality.

Mr. Atkins: Drinking water in the United Kingdom is of a very high quality. My right hon. Friend has no immediate plans to change the quality standards, which the water companies are required to achieve in advance of the forthcoming revision of the EC drinking water directive.

Correspondence

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will reply to the letter of 13 April from the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East and previous correspondence on the exemption of severely mentally impaired people from liability for payment of council tax; and if he will make a statement regarding the present position.

Mr. Baldry: I wrote to the hon. Member on 27 April informing him that this matter was still under discussion.

City Challenge

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been spent by each city challenge committee on administration and other non-regenerative expenses in each year since 1992.

Mr. Baldry: Administrative costs defrayed by each round 1 city challenge partnership in 1992-93 and 1993-94 and each round 2 partnership in 1993-94 are as follows:

Administrative costs

(£000s)

Partnership	*1992-93*	*[1]1993-94*
Round 1		
Middlesbrough	295	341
Newcastle	311	322
Manchester	447	418
Liverpool	340	330
Wirral	330	250
Wolverhampton	370	257
Nottingham	179	262
Dearne Valley	150	150
Bradford	299	316
Lewisham	281	320
Tower Hamlets	336	418
TOTAL (Round 1)	3,338	3,384
Round 2		
Hartlepool	—	316
North Tyneside	—	300
Stockton	—	290
Sunderland	—	300
Blackburn	—	250
Bolton	—	300
Wigan	—	246
Sefton	—	300
Birmingham	—	290
Sandwell	—	355
Walsall	—	317
Derby	—	400
Leicester	—	300
Barnsley	—	370
Kirklees	—	315
Hackney	—	500
Kensington and Chelsea	—	320
Lambeth	—	550
Newham	—	297
Brent	—	445
TOTAL (Round 2)	—	6,761
TOTAL (Round 1 and 2)	3,338	10,145

[1]All figures for administrative costs in 1993-94 are provisional. Final figures will not be available until after the receipt of local authorities' final audited claims.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was *(a)* the total budget that central Government have made available and *(b)* the amount that has been spent by the city challenge committee on regeneration projects for each city challenge area in each year since 1992.

Mr. Baldry: City challenge partnerships have received a total funding allocation of £7·5 million per annum for

five years. Partnerships' expenditure limits were revised as appropriate in order to offset predicted underspends, as they became known, against opportunities to expedite spend elsewhere. These in-year changes do not affect the overall sum allocated to each partnership, which remains at £37·5 million for the five years.

Final expenditure limits and outturn, inclusive of administrative costs, against expenditure limits for each round 1 city challenge partnership in 1992-93 and 1993-94 and each round 2 partnership in 1993-94 are as follows:

£ thousands

Partnership	1992-93 Final expenditure limit	1992-93 Outturn	1993-94 Final expenditure limit	1993-94 [1]Outturn
Round 1				
Middlesbrough	7,486	7,492	8,613	8,400
Newcastle	7,500	7,500	7,675	7,537
Manchester	7,828	7,828	9,376	9,282
Liverpool	7,500	7,384	8,316	8,304
Wirral	7,500	7,461	7,500	7,500
Wolverhampton	8,250	8,241	8,090	7,396
Nottingham	7,585	7,574	8,420	8,368
Dearne Valley	7,100	7,101	7,150	7,150
Bradford	7,430	7,420	6,700	6,685
Lewisham	7,870	7,828	7,824	7,822
Tower Hamlets	6,451	6,320	7,008	6,938
(Total) (Round 1)	82,500	82,149	86,672	85,382

[1] All figures for outturn in 1993-94 are provisional. Final figures will not be available until after the receipt of local authorities' 1993-94 final audited claims.

Partnership	1993-94 Final expenditure limit (£000s)	Expenditure[1] (£000s)
Round 2		
Hartlepool	7,500	7,413
North Tyneside	7,500	7,364
Stockton	7,500	7,500
Sunderland	7,500	7,499
Blackburn	7,200	7,192
Bolton	7,500	7,499
Wigan	7,791	7,733
Sefton	6,684	6,448
Birmingham	6,969	6,679
Sandwell	7,500	7,319
Walsall	7,500	7,496
Derby	7,500	7,500
Leicester	5,300	5,300
Barnsley	7,500	7,495
Kirklees	6,500	6,445
Hackney	8,384	8,384
Kensington and Chelsea	8,000	8,050
Lambeth	5,600	5,592
Newham	8,400	8,322
Brent	7,500	7,381
Total (round 2)	145,829	144,611
Total (round 1 and 2)	232,500	229,993

[1] All figures for outturn in 1993-94 are provisional. Final figures will not be available until after the receipt of local authorities' 1993-94 final audited claims.

HEALTH

Patient Costs

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the average daily cost per patient for all specialties in directly managed units and national health service trusts for each year since 1988-89;

(2) what was the average daily cost per patient for surgical specialties in directly managed units and national health service trusts in each year since 1988-89.

Mr. Sackville: Information for the financial years 1991-92 and 1992-93 is shown in the table. The first wave of national health service trusts was established in April 1991. Comparable data for previous years are not available.

	1991-92	1992-93
	Surgical Specialties	
NHS Trusts	£227·64	£226·76
DMUs	£228·34	£246·74
	All Specialties	
NHS Trusts	£175·38	£164·33
DMUs	£155·61	£167·80

Source: Annual financial returns of regional, district and special health authorities and NHS trusts (1991-92 and 1992-93).

Notes:

1. Surgical specialties include general surgery, urology, trauma and orthopaedics, ENT, ophthalmology, gynaecology, dental specialties, neurosurgery, plastic surgery, cardiothoracic surgery and paediatric surgery.
2. Figures are based on in-patients and day cases.
3. Figures include overheads and capital charges.

Ms Storrs

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the NHS executive has received legal advice in the matter of the £78,000 paid to Ms Storrs by the Wessex regional health authority; and what steps are being taken to recover this payment.

Dr. Mawhinney: Legal advice has been obtained by the regional health authority and we are discussing with them whether recovery action would be cost-effective.

Health Literature Line

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the titles of leaflets sent out by the health literature line since April 1993 and the numbers of each distributed.

Mr. Sackville: Information on leaflet titles and numbers ordered have been placed in the Library. Copies of the publications that are currently available will be placed in the Library.

Computer Reimbursement

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what amount was spent in primary care on computer reimbursement in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table based on quarterly returns from family health services authorities. The amount reimbursed in 1990-91, when the scheme was introduced, includes claims for the years 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Year	*£ million*
1990-91	17·5
1991-92	34·0
1992-93	40·2
1993-94	[1]36·5

[1]Provisional figure.

Data Protection

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who holds the copyright on data in primary care *(a)* in written notes and *(b)* on computers; and what statute, regulations or guidance govern this matter.

Mr. Sackville: The physical records on which data about patients is recorded by general practitioners are owned by the family health services authority. The equitable copyright of that data is also vested in the FHSA under common law because the author of the record compiles it pursuant to an obligation to maintain records, his remuneration in part is based on his doing so and he does so in circumstances whereby he owes a duty of good faith and fidelity to the FHSA. The principles apply equally to manual and computerised records.

Advertising

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what television advertisements her Department has paid for to promote Her Majesty's Government's health policy over the last two years; if she will consider running advertisements to educate the public about not calling out general practitioners unnecessarily at night; if she will examine the results of similar campaigns in Canada; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Television advertising campaigns for drug and solvent misuse and for organ donation have been carried out in each of the last two years at a total estimated cost of £5,509,156.

We are, jointly with the medical profession, working on an extension of the "Help Us to Help You" campaign to inform patients about making best, and appropriate, use of general practitioner out-of-hours services. We have no plans to use television advertising in this campaign.

Sex Education

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans she has to ensure that health professionals receive training in good educational practice for the delivery of sex education in schools;

(2) what plans she has to ensure that health professionals will be fully cognisant of their legal responsibilities in the delivery of sex education in schools;

(3) what steps she is taking to ensure that the skills of health education professionals in her Department are co-ordinated with those of Department for Education professionals teaching sex education in schools.

Mr. Sackville: Arrangements to meet any sex education training needs of health professionals are a matter for local determination by health authorities.

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to set up an inter-departmental working group to share, develop and co-ordinate good practice in the delivery of sex education in schools.

Mr. Sackville: None. The Department for Education's forthcoming circular on the provision of sex education in schools will give advice to education authorities on links with health authorities and the role of health professionals in providing sex education.

Family Health Centres (North of England)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many family health centres per 1,000 population there are in *(a)* Doncaster, *(b)* Barnsley, *(c)* Rotherham and *(d)* Sheffield.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is shown in the table.

Family Health Services Authority	*Number of Health Centres*	*Population in thousands*	*Health Centres per 1,000*
Doncaster	12	293	0·04
Barnsley	16	225	0·07
Rotherham	11	255	0·04
Sheffield	10	531	0·02

Notes:
The number of Health Centres is as at 1 October 1993.
The Population data for family health services authorities comes from Office of Population Censuses and Surveys mid 1992 estimates from the 1991 Census.

Child Mortality Rate

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the national child mortality rate; and what are the rates in *(a)* Doncaster, *(b)* Barnsley, *(c)* Rotherham and *(d)* Sheffield.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table:

Child mortality[1] rates in England and Wales, Doncaster, Barnsley, Rotherham and Sheffield County Districts for the combined years of 1990-1992.

	1990-1992 rate[2]	
	Male	*Female*
England and Wales	83	64
Doncaster	90	64
Barnsley	90	67
Rotherham	92	62
Sheffield	85	78

[1] 0-14 years of age
[2] Rate per 100,000 population
Note:
The combined years of 1990-92 have been used to overcome the random fluctuations due to the small number of events in these areas.

Good Hope Hospital, Birmingham

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will call for a report on the availability of the speech and language therapy facility at Good Hope hospital in Birmingham between 31 March and 1 July and explanations for the deficiencies in provision;

(2) if she will call for a report on the procedures adopted for allocating the contract for speech and language therapy at Good Hope hospital up to 31 March.

Mr. Sackville: The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Doug Ellis, chairman of the trust, for details.

DNase

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health with which regional health authorities her Department has had discussions relating to the use of the drug DNase; if she has recommended its use to regional health authorities; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has been contacted by Bristol and District health authority about DNase, initially via the South West regional health authority. The Department advises health authorities to purchase health care on the basis of the best available information about the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of interventions: it has issued no specific advice about DNase.

Community Health Councils

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what dates and where she has held discussions with officers of community health councils in the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: Health Ministers have had a number of discussions with individual community health councils and their representative organisations. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State met the chief officer and vice chair of West Surrey and North East Hampshire CHC in January of last year. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) and I spoke at the Association of Community Health Councils for England and Wales annual conferences in 1992 and 1993 respectively.

Infant Mortality

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the level of infant mortality in each of the past 10 years in each district health authority in Birmingham.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Infant Mortality (Numbers and Rates[2]) for Birmingham DHAs 1983-92

DHA	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Numbers										
East Birmingham	35	50	33	31	37	32	30	48	36	28
North Birmingham	23	20	21	20	17	24	15	23	19	18
West Birmingham	46	45	49	39	33	48	39	51	49	38
South Birmingham	32	43	38	44	35	45	41	40	65	74
Central Birmingham[1]	37	41	35	34	27	45	36	43	—	—
Rates										
East Birmingham	10·8	15·4	9·7	9·1	10·8	9·3	8·3	12·7	9·7	7·5
North Birmingham	12·6	10·2	10·7	9·9	8·0	11·3	7·4	10·9	9·0	9·0
West Birmingham	11·4	11·3	12·1	10·0	8·3	12·3	9·9	12·8	11·9	9·9
South Birmingham	9·6	12·1	10·6	12·3	9·5	12·4	11·1	10·7	9·4	11·5
Central Birmingham[1]	12·8	14·2	11·9	11·3	9·0	15·0	12·6	14·2	—	—

[1] From 1991 Central Birmingham DHA and South Birmingham DHA merged, retaining the name South Birmingham.
[2] Rate per 1,000 live births.
Data based on place of usual residence at death.

Bioethics

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how she proposes to respond to the report of the Nuffield Council on Bioethics "Genetic Screening: Ethical Issues", and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 22 February, *Official Report*, column 203.

NHS Estate

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she has taken to implement the Audit Commission report on NHS estate management and property maintenance; what further action she proposes to take to implement the report; and what additional funds have been allocated for property maintenance.

Mr. Sackville: The Audit Commission's report, which was published in 1991, has stimulated the following activities:

(a) all provider units are required to produce estate management and development strategies including projections for auditors in backlog maintenance.
(b) plans for the five year period to March 1997 indicate an intention to reduce backlog maintenance by 37 per cent. or £1·43 billion.
(c) revised guidance on estate maintenance and property utilisation was issued to the National Health Service in October 1993.

No separate funds are allocated for property maintenance. These are treated as normal revenue costs which provider units include in their prices.

Asthma

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research is being conducted into the rate of increase in the incidence of asthma; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on 14 February, *Official Report*, column 627, and my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) on 29 March, *Official Report*, column 684.

Brighton Health Trust

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will ensure the dismissal of the chairman and chief executive of the Brighton health trust in relation to their policy statement on the treatment of people above a certain age.

Dr. Mawhinney: No.

Security

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the use of private detective agencies and security companies by her Department.

Mr. Sackville: The Department does not use private detective agencies but does use security companies to guard official premises where this provides best value for money.

NHS Estates Agency

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the plans for 1994-95 for the NHS Estates executive agency.

Mr. Sackville: I am pleased to report that the national health services estates management and health building agency—NHS Estates—has had a successful year as an executive agency of this Department. I have agreed the agency's 1994-95 annual business plan, and have placed in the Library copies of its key tasks and targets for 1994-95.

Civil Servants (Business Appointments)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many civil servants in her Department and its predecessor department applied in each year since 1986 through the business opportunities system to take up an outside appointment *(a)* as an independent consultant, *(b)* with a firm of consultants and *(c)* in other employment; how many were referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments; and how many were granted.

Mr. Sackville: The available information from 1989 is shown in the table.

Department of Health—Business appointment applications

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Number of applicants	11	11	10	6	13	5
Independent consultants	1	2	3	1	5	0
Unconditional approval	0	1	1	1	5	0
Conditional approval	1	1	2	0	0	0
Consultant firm	0	0	0	0	0	1
Unconditional approval	0	0	0	0	0	1
Conditional approval	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	10	9	7	5	8	4
Unconditional approval	9	9	6	5	8	4
Conditional approval	1	0	1	0	0	0
Number referred to advisory committee	0	1	0	0	1	0
Granted	0	1	0	0	1	0

NHS Trusts (Employees)

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance her Department has issued to NHS trust employees about part-time employment as consultants in companies which might bid for contracts with NHS trusts; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Guidance is contained in HSG (93)5, copies of which are available in the Library.

Allergies

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list by region the national health service centres for treatments *(a)* for allergies in general and *(b)* for allergic reactions to steroid treatments;

(2) what research her Department has commissioned into the links between serious allergic reactions and steroid treatments; and if she will publish the conclusions of the research.

Mr. Sackville: A list of national health service allergy clinics is published by the British Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology, copies of which will be placed in the Library.

The Department has no plans to carry out research into allergic reactions to steroid treatment. Allergic reactions to steroid treatment are extremely rare, and most frequently affect the skin, in which case treatment would be obtained in the dermatology clinic in the district hospital.

Residential Care and Nursing Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what proposals she has for amendments to legislation concerning the regulation and inspection of residential care and nursing homes; when such proposals will be published; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what proposals she has to issue new guidance or amend existing regulations concerning the regulation and inspection of residential care and nursing homes; when the proposals will be published; and if she will make a statement;

Mr. Bowis: The Department is discussing those matters with regulatory and provider interests. We will consult more widely if, in due course, we have specific proposals for improving regulation and inspection processes while retaining safeguards for vulnerable residents.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps will be taken to ensure the suitability of the lay assessors proposed for the monitoring of residential care.

Mr. Bowis: The recruitment and selection of lay assessors, and the terms on which they are engaged, are matters in which authorities are free to use their discretion. However, the Department's policy guidance emphasises the need for authorities to satisfy themselves about the suitability of the people they engage. Copies of the guidance, LAC(94)16, will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what independent research has been undertaken into the operation of the Registered Homes Act 1984, as amended; and in what way this is being taken into account during her review of this Act.

Mr. Bowis: We are not aware of any such research.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps have been taken to monitor and evaluate the cost of inspection and regulation of residential care and nursing homes.

Mr. Bowis: Local authorities and health authorities provide information annually on their costs in registering and inspecting residential care homes and nursing homes respectively. Those costs are kept under review by the Department.

"Home Life" Manual

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps are currently being taken to review the provisions of her Department's "Home Life" manual.

Mr. Bowis: We are considering with respresentatives of the local authorities associations and other interested parties the need for a review of "Home Life".

Orthopaedic Implants

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what date the replacement of the "Guide to Good Manufacturing Practice for Orthopaedic Implants" by the "Quality Systems for Orthopaedic Implants-Good Manufacturing Practice" became effective; who was responsible for the replacement; what consultations she undertook in relation to the replacement of the former by the latter; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The "Guide to Good Manufacturing Practice for Orthopaedic Implants" was replaced with the "Quality Systems Document for Orthopaedic Implants" by the supplies technology division of the Department of Health with effect from 1 May 1991. The main reason for the change was to bring departmental standards in line with international standards for quality assurance, BS 5750 Part 1 1987 equivalent to ISO 9001. Relevant medical device trade associations were consulted in the drawing up of the revised document.

Patients Over 70

Mr. Cann: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance is issued in the NHS on whether patients aged 70 years and over admitted to hospitals with suspected heart attacks should be placed in coronary care units rather than general wards.

Mr. Sackville: Decisions about the most appropriate admission and treatment are based upon the needs of the individual patient and should be taken by the clinicians in charge of the patient.

Out-of-hours Work (Doctors)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will publish the report by KPMG Peat Marwick about out-of-hours work by doctors.

Dr. Mawhinney: Ministers are currently considering the report.

NHS (Private Finance)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 14 April, *Official Report*, column 293, if she will provide details of the value of private sector capital for each of the 20 schemes which have been approved centrally since February 1993 and the private sector companies involved.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

NHS projects using private capital over £1 million approved since February 1993

NHS partner	*Scheme*	*Private sector partner*	*Capital cost (£ million)*
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow Health Agency	Lease of office accommodation	Sun Alliance	3·0
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority	Clinical waste incineration	Yorkshire Water Enterprises	6·0
Hastings and Rother NHS Trust (Conquest Hospital)	Staff residences	Croudace Homes and Orbit Housing	1·4
West Middlesex University Hospital NHS Trust	Endoscopy unit	Lister Bestcare	1·0
North Bedfordshire Health Authority (Steppingley and Biggleswade Hospitals)	Residential accommodation	Health and Care Services (UK) Ltd.	1·4
Bolton Health Authority	Clinical waste incineration	Yorkshire Water Enterprises	2·6
New River Health Authority	Lease of office accommodation	Markheath plc	2·0
Leicester Mental Health Services NHS Trust	Lease of new headquarters	Raynsway Properties Ltd.	1·6

NHS partner	Scheme	Private sector partner	Capital cost (£ million)
South East Kent Health Authority (William Harvey Hospital)	Clinical waste incineration	Dyvell Ltd.	3·0
Barnet Health Authority (Headon Hospital)	Residential accommodation	Metropolitan Housing Trust and Servite Houses	2·3
Plymouth and Torbay Health Authority	Clinical waste incineration	South West Water plc	2·0
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster Health Authority (Carlton Gate)	Staff residences	Higgs and Hill Ltd.	2·5
East Sussex Health Authority	Residential accommodation	Associated Nursing Sevices	3·0
Brent and Harrow Health Authority (Clamp Hill)	Residential accommodation	Community Health Services Ltd.	2·1
Doncaster Healthcare NHS Trust	Clinical waste incineration	Motherwell Bridge Envirotec	2·7
Kent and Canterbury Hospitals NHS Trust	Staff accommodation	Bradford and Northern Housing Association and Wiltshier Construction (South) Ltd.	3·3
St. James's University Hospital NHS Trust	Combined heat and power plant	Yorkshire Cogen Ltd.	3·0
Hertfordshire Health Agency	Lease of office accommodation	Brixton Estate Management Ltd.	4·2
Hillingdon Health Agency	Lease of office accommodation	Scottish Metropolitan	1·7

Urban Policies

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list every urban policy that has been instituted or operated from 1979, the date that each scheme began operating, where appropriate when they ceased operating and the funds available on an annual basis at current prices.

Mr. Baldry: Economic, social and physical regeneration is supported through main programmes by several Government Departments and by targeted initiatives. My reply of 25 April 1994 to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) *Official Report*, columns 36-37, contained detailed information about the latter programmes, including spending from 1981-82. For the urban programme, which began in 1979, the additional figures sought are £83 million for 1979-80 and £112 million for 1980-81 in cash terms. All the programmes listed in the earlier reply have now been combined within the single regeneration Budget from 1 April 1994.

While not included in the earlier reply, enterprise zones, also a targeted urban initiative were launched in 1981. They offer a range of incentives to industrial and commercial firms in designated areas. These have not involved any direct expenditure, but an estimated £1·7 billion has been forgone in rates and taxes.

EDUCATION

Thamesmead Primary Schools

5. **Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to meet parents and staff of primary schools in Thamesmead.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has no such plans.

Vandalism

14. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what special help is available for schools suffering especially severe problems of vandalism.

Mr. Boswell: Detailed security measures appropriate for a school suffering vandalism problems are best determined by the school governing body in consultation with the local police crime prevention officers.

The Department has published comprehensive guidance for schools on measures commensurate with the risk they are facing.

Liverpool Schools

15. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to make resources available to refurbish older and pre-war schools in Liverpool.

Mr. Forth: Capital support for maintained schools in the area of Liverpool local education authority, including voluntary aided and special agreement schools, amounts to over £7 million in 1994-95.

Ethnic Minority Pupils

16. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he next plans to meet the Home Secretary to discuss the effect of the cuts to the section 11 budget on equal access for pupils with an ethnic minority background to the curriculum in schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Grant-maintained Schools

17. **Mr. Connarty:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many schools have voted to opt out of local education authority control under the Government's present scheme; and what is the average revenue grant given by the Government to such schools in the first year of their direct grant-aided status.

Mr. Robin Squire: To date parents at more than 1,100 schools in England have voted in favour of grant-maintained status.

In addition to the recurrent grants which grant-maintained schools are eligible to receive each year, schools new to the sector receive a grant to help meet transitional costs in the first year. In 1994-95, schools with

less than two years' experience of managing a delegated budget will be eligible to receive a grant equivalent to £30,000 plus £30 per pupil. Other schools will be eligible to receive £20,000 plus £15 per pupil.

19. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about the number of primary schools opting for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Robin Squire: To date, 445 primary schools have voted for grant-maintained status. The number of self-governing primary schools has more than trebled in the past year.

20. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what guidelines he has issued to local education authorities as to what would be a reasonable percentage deduction for the provision of central support services prior to the allocation of funds to grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: None.

22. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many parental ballots have taken place on the issue of grant-maintained status since September 1993; what were the results; and what were the figures for the previous 12 months.

Mr. Robin Squire: Since 1 September 1993, 217 ballots on grant-maintained status have closed, 137 of which resulted in votes in favour of self-government, and 80 in votes against. In the preceding 12 months, there were 703 ballots, 544 of which resulted in a yes vote and 159 in a no vote.

Education Expenditure

21. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are his proposals for future spending on education in England.

Mr. Forth: Planned spending by central Government, subject to review in the public expenditure survey, rises from £10·4 billion in 1994-95 to £11·3 billion in 1996-97. The 1994-95 grant settlement allows for LEAs in England to spend £17·1 billion on education; the 1995-96 settlement will be announced later in the year.

Further Education Colleges

24. **Mr. Pickthall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the implementation of new contracts in further education colleges.

Mr. Boswell: In order to implement our policy to encourage flexibility by holdback, the Further Education Funding Council will be asking colleges to sign a declaration shortly about the introduction of new contracts. I understand that most colleges have introduced a new contract for newly appointed staff.

Student Loans

25. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what correspondence he has received from students on the question of student loans in the last month.

Mr. Boswell: During March 1994, the Department received about 270 letters about student support issues. It is not possible to separate letters about student loans from letters on the other student support matters.

School Leaving Age

26. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to raise the school leaving age.

Mr. Forth: None.

Special Educational Needs

27. **Mr. Berry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to provide suitable training for special educational needs co-ordinators in schools.

Mr. Forth: The draft code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs confirms the importance of training for special educational needs co-ordinators. Over £5·5 million is newly available to schools this year to help them develop special educational needs policies and train co-ordinators. This is on top of the support of nearly £10 million for training in special educational needs more generally. In addition, the Department is planning measures to disseminate the messages of the code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs, subject to parliamentary approval of the draft, to special educational needs co-ordinators and others.

National Tests

28. **Sir David Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what further discussions he is planning with the education services concerning national tests this year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: We have not received any further requests to discuss the 1994 national tests, and we have no plans to do so.

Educational Exports

29. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to encourage the growth in the export of British educational services.

Mr. Boswell: I refer my right hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans).

Bolton Institute of Higher Education

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects to reach a decision on Bolton Institute of Higher Education's application for research degree availability powers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

The institute's application for research degree-awarding powers is currently under consideration and a decision will be reached as soon as possible.

Specialist Subjects

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the effect of local government reform on the work of local education authorities in relation to the provision of teaching in specialist subjects.

Mr. Robin Squire: Any changes resulting from the review of local government will not affect schools' responsibilities for delivering the national curriculum. The Local Government Commission is required to consider the implications of reorganisation for all local authority services including education.

Nursery Education

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proposals he has further to extend nursery education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short), *Official Report*, 29 March, column *738*.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the total amount of money allocated in the education budget for nursery and early year training and initiatives in 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The 1994-95 local authority grant settlement allows for local authorities in England to spend £17,087 million on education. It is for individual local authorities and schools to decide how much to spend on nursery and early years education, including staff training, in the light of their own particular circumstances.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what advice is given by his Department to schools on the provision of resources for the training of nursery teachers and nursery nurses in 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: No such advice has been given. The allocation of their resources for the training of staff is a matter for schools themselves.

Single-sex Education

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make an official visit to the London borough of Havering to assess the adequacy of the provision of single-sex education in the area.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend sees no need for such a visit.

Civil Servants (Business Appointments)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many civil servants in his Department applied in each year since 1986 through the business appointments system to take up an outside appointment *(a)* as an independent consultant, *(b)* in a firm of consultants and *(c)* in other employment; how many were referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments; and how many were granted.

Mr. Boswell: Detailed records of outside appointments taken up under the business appointments system have been maintained by the Department since 1990. The information required is given in the table.

The great majority of applications in 1990 and 1991 came from former members of Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools.

	Number of applications	*Number granted*	*With whom*	*Number referred to Advisory Committee on Business Appointments*
1990	23	23	4 – Independent consultants 2 – Consultants 17 – Other employment	2
1991	16	16	5 – Independent consultants 11 – Other employment	None
1992	No applications recorded			
1993	6	6	2 – Independent consultants 1 – Consultants 3 – Other employment	2
1994	To date one application has been submitted which has been referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments. Awaiting a decision.			

Education Support and Training

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received on the matter of reduction in grants for education support and training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: In responding to the Department's letters indicating allocations for 1994-95, a number of local educational authorities have indicated that they would have preferred larger sums. The national reduction from £320 million in 1993-94 to £270 million in 1994-95 reflected the growing number of self-governing schools and overall pressures on public expenditure.

Urban Policy Initiatives

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list every urban policy initiative that has been instituted or operated since 1979, the date that each scheme began operating, where appropriate the date that the scheme ceased operating and the funds available on an annual basis under each scheme.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department has provided grant support over three years—1992 to 1995—for projects to raise standards in inner city schools through activity 19 of grants for education support and training. Total supported expenditure for each of the three years is given in the table.

	£ million
1992-93	6·6
1993-94	10·3
1994-95	8·0

Local Management of Schools

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects all primary and secondary schools to have fully delegated powers under local management of schools.

Mr. Forth: All primary and secondary schools now have delegated budgets, except in a very small number of cases where deregulation has been withdrawn by LEAs.

Security

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the use of private detective agencies and security companies by his Department.

Mr. Boswell: The Department makes no use of private detective agencies. In so far as security companies are concerned, I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) on 22 April 1994, *Official Report*, column 677.

City Technology Colleges

23. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list his responsibilities in relation to the organisation of city technology colleges.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend's responsibilities are laid down in section 105 of the Education Reform Act 1988 and in the funding agreements drawn up under that section for each city technology college. Copies of the Act and the model funding agreement are available in the Library. CTCs are independent schools given the maximum discretion to manage their own affairs.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will place in the Library a copy of the management plan of each of the 13 schools listed in his announcement of 26 April.

Mr. Robin Squire: No. Applications under the technology colleges initiative were prepared by individual schools and their sponsors for submission to the Department. Management plans were not necessarily prepared with any expectation that they would become public documents.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list for each of the 13 schools listed in his announcement of 26 April, the date when it will become a technology college, its current pupil roll and character, whether he has received an application for approval to a change in its admissions arrangements, how many sponsor governors are being appointed, what is the term of office of each sponsor governor and which of the sponsors are represented by a sponsor governor.

Mr. Robin Squire: The 13 schools announced on 26 April each plan to operate as technology colleges from 1 September 1994. None of the schools has applied to make a change in its admission arrangements constituting a change of character within the meaning of the Education Act 1993. Each school has confirmed its intention formally to apply to take on between one and four sponsor governors before September 1994. Which of the sponsors are represented by sponsor governors will be determined at that stage. The term of office for sponsor governors is required under the Education Act 1993 to be between five and seven years, with the exact term being specified in the instrument of government. The current pupil roll and character of each school is summarised in the table.

School	[1] *Pupil number*	*Age range and character*
Applemore Technology School	764	11–16 non-selective mixed
Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School	925	11–18 selective mixed
Denefield School	1,071	11–18 non-selective mixed
John Kelly Boys Community School	511	11–18 non-selective boys
John Kelly Girls Community School	739	11–18 non-selective girls
Lancaster Royal Grammar School	876	11–18 selective boys
Mill Hill County High School	1,199	11–18 non-selective mixed
The Philip Morant School	1,257	11–16 non-selective mixed
Rastrick High School	1,044	11–18 non-selective mixed
Ravens Wood School for Boys	983	11–19 non-selective boys
Sale Moor School	644	11–16 non-selective mixed
Senacre Technology School	920	11–17 non-selective mixed
Small Heath School	978	11–19 non-selective mixed

[1] Provisional at January 1994 as returned to the Department for Education and subject to validation.

TRANSPORT

Overseas Consultancies

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the overseas consultancies undertaken by the Transport Research Laboratory during the last five years, the value of each contract and the country it was dealing with.

Mr. Key: As the information requested by the hon. Member relates to operational matters of the Transport Research Laboratory I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from J. Wotton to Mr. Michael Meacher, dated 29 April 1994:

PQ2035/93/94

The Minister for Roads and Traffic has asked me to reply to your Question about the overseas consultancies undertaken by the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL).

I enclose a list of consultancies undertaken over the last five years. The list gives details of the nature of each consultancy, the total value of each contract and the country in which the consultancy work was carried out.

Consultancy Topic	*Total value of project* £
1989-90	
Sweden—Training	1,400
Tanzania—Highway Maintenance	2,000
Cyprus—Project Appraisal	2,000
Botswana—Road Materials	3,000
Zimbabwe—Pavement Design	11,000
Jamaica—Environmental Assessment	12,500
Botswana—Materials	8,200
1990-91	
Zimbabwe—Pavement Design	55,000
Sri Lanka—Institution Strengthening	333,000
Indonesia—Institution Strengthening	846,000
Thailand—Urban Transport Planning	8,000
Zimbabwe—Road Safety	12,000
Lesotho—Road Safety	4,000
Laos—Road failure Study	22,000
Oman—Pavement Engineering	129,000
Singapore—Pavement Evaluation	37,000
1991-92	
Cyprus—Training	12,000
Sri Lanka—Road Safety	18,000
Nigeria—Urban Transport	7,000
Tanzania—Pavement Evaluation	15,000
Botswana—Materials Study	11,000
Laos—Road Failure Study	69,000
Sudan—Economic Appraisal	5,000
Cyprus—Training	4,000
Nepal—Road Rehabilitation	28,000
1992-93	
Kenya—Road Maintenance	4,000
Zambia—Road Maintenance	4,000
Cyprus—Training	3,000
Botswana—Materials Study	8,000
Namibia—Materials Study	7,000
Nepal—Road Rehabilitation	53,000
Mauritius—Pavement Evaluation	13,000
Jordan—Pavement Evaluation	169,000
Tanzania—Pavement Evaluation	4,000
Korea—Training	4,000
Bangladesh—Appraisal	34,000
China—Urban Transport	54,000
Zimbabwe—Urban Transport	30,000
Malaysia—Road Safety	8,000
Seychelles—Road Safety	24,000
Malta—Pavement Evaluation	22,000
Malta—Pavement Evaluation	15,000
Holland—Traffic Study	28,000
Central Europe—Road Safety	21,000
Europe—DRIVE Raporteur	36,000
1993-94	
Mauritius—Traffic and Transport Study	20,000
Bahrain—Pavement Evaluation	32,000
China—Urban Transport	10,000
Mauritius—Pavement Evaluation	7,000
Yemen—Pavement Evaluation	6,000
Cyprus—Training	5,000
Zimbabwe—Feeder Road Study	123,000
Fiji—Road Safety	38,000
Malawi—Road Safety	7,000
China—Urban Transport	12,000
Vietnam—Appraisal	10,000
Argentina—Urban Transport	15,000
Zimbabwe—Feeder Road Study	110,000
Hong Kong—Airport Vibrations	5,000
Botswana—Pavement Evaluation	40,000
Europe—Tyre Noise Study	11,000
Europe—HGV Taxation	12,000

Vehicle Journeys

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the average daily numbers of *(a)* commercial transport vehicle journeys and *(b)* the number of private motor car journeys undertaken in each English region in each year since 1979.

Mr. Key: The information requested is not available. However, figures of the average daily flows of traffic, classified by vehicle type, in English regions, for 1991 and 1992, are published in "Road Traffic Statistics Great Britain" 1992 and 1993 respectively. Copies of these publications are available in the House of Commons Library.

Rail Privatisation

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will define the role of Dewe Rogerson on behalf of his Department in relation to rail privatisation; and how much it has been paid to date.

Mr. Freeman: Dewe Rogerson were appointed in March 1993 as advisers on the appropriate marketing strategy for ensuring the successful implementation of the Government's rail privatisation policy.

To date, Dewe Rogerson have been paid £520,000 excluding VAT for this advice.

Trunk Roads Review

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what fresh advice or representations he received on the strategic importance of the proposed improvements to the A64, the A19 and the A1237 during his recent review of trunk roads in England.

Mr. Key: During the recent review of trunk roads, schemes in the existing programme were prioritised on the basis of route importance, economic benefits, and

environmental constraints. The case for the improvement of the A64 between York and Seamer has been accepted, but construction will be deferred until a later date. Similar considerations apply to the A19 Thormanby bypass and the Shipton by Beningborough bypass. The A1237 York northern bypass improvement has been withdrawn because of local opposition on traffic and environmental grounds.

Strensham Services

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will arrange to amend the notice north of junction 15 on the M40 to show the correct distance to Strensham services on the M5.

Mr. Key: This is a matter for the Highways Agency and the chief executive will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Peter Luff, dated 29 April 1994:

You recently asked the Secretary of State for Transport, in a written PQ, if he would arrange to amend the notice north of junction 15 on the M40 to show the correct distance to Strensham Services on the M5. As this is the responsibility of the Highways Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to reply.

The sign north of M40 junction 15 was recently amended as part of the West Midlands motorway box resigning. Unfortunately the distance to the Strensham Services on the M5 south had been incorrectly given as 17 miles instead of 45 miles. A cover plate giving the correct distance has now been made and you will be pleased to know that the sign was amended on 26 April.

BR Land (Trespass)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria are used in making a decision as to whether or not to prosecute for trespass on BR land, including railway lines.

Mr. Freeman: Decisions on prosecutions are made in accordance with the Attorney-General's guidelines.

Mr. Robert Horton

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 15 April, *Official Report*, column *333*, on which three weekdays Mr. Robert Horton is expected to work for Railtrack; what hours are stipulated; and what are his holiday entitlements and principal fringe benefits.

Mr. Freeman: Mr. Horton works on the days of the week which meet the requirements of Railtrack. His holidays and benefits are negotiated between him and the company.

Cherished Number Transfers

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 21 February, *Official Report*, column *82*, on which visits the chief executive met administrative assistants or administrative officers.

Mr. Key: During his visits to the agency's local offices the chief executive tries to meet as many staff as possible of all grades.

Departmental Transfers

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) of 4 February, *Official Report*, column *1004*, if he will make a statement regarding the various departmental transfers; what they were; and how much cost was involved.

Mr. Norris: The various interdepartmental transfers were:

(i) £500,000 from the Department of National Heritage to cover the cost of archaeology surveys and excavations;
(ii) £30,000 from the Department of the Environment, £473,000 from Property Holdings and £247,000 from Defence Research Agency for hard charged repayment services; and
(iii) £1,376,000 refunded from the Department of the Environment in respect of the discontinuance of the scheme to improve Lower Road, Southwark.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 21 February, *Official Report*, column *81*, if he will state, against each date listed, the purpose of the visit by the DVLA chief executive to his Department's headquarters.

Mr. Key: These visits all involved discussions with Ministers or senior officials on matters concerning the management of the agency.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on when the trail of automated first registration and licensing by DVLA began; where the trial is being conducted; and what are its terms of reference, objectives, the evaluation process of the trial, the definition of what will be a successful trial and details of the implementation timetable.

Mr. Key: The automated first registration and licensing project will speed up the registration process for new cars, make significant cost savings for the motor trade and improve the quality of the DVLA vehicle record, which is vital to the police in the fight against crime. A total of 6,500 car dealers and 16 motor manufacturers are expected progressively to take advantage of the new facility from later this year onwards.

A two-stage pilot scheme has been developed to test two different methods of computer linkage between motor dealers and the DVLA system—direct connection and connection via the manufacturer's management system. The first phase will start on 23 May involving certain dealers in the Bristol area with the second scheduled for October.

The terms of reference for the pilot are to prove the technical integrity of the new system and to ensure that it delivers the required benefits to the motoring public, dealers, manufacturers, and other interests. Live operations will be carefully monitored to ensure that the systems and procedures can be implemented without compromising security or existing procedures.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 7 March, *Official Report*, column *4*, if he will make a statement on how the senior management in DVLA was revised; how this had improved management of the agency; what advice and assistance was given by the consultants Price Waterhouse; and at what cost.

Mr. Key: Following a review of its management structure and operations DVLA revised its organisation into more focused executive groups, plus other changes. This has helped sharpen decision-making and reduced costs. Price Waterhouse provided expertise and advice to the agency's management, drawing on its experience of other organisations in both the public and private sectors. Its fees and expenses totalled some £72,000.

Receipts (Shortfall)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) of 4 February, *Official Report*, column *1004*, if he will make a statement regarding the shortfall of receipts from the recovery of administrative costs and various repayment services; how large the shortfall was; what the receipts were; what administrative costs were involved; and if he will list all the repayment services involved in the shortfall.

Mr. Norris: The shortfall in receipts on class VI, vote 2, was £4·2 million. It relates principally to payments made to the central Department for services provided to the Department's agencies. The agencies have been encouraged, in line with "next steps" principles, to assume direct responsibility for services such as personnel, finance and accounting, previously provided by the central Department. The lower receipts reflect their reduced demand for central services.

Expenditure Increases

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) of 4 February, *Official Report*, column *1004*, if he will make a statement regarding the increases in expenditure; and what is the amount of the increased expenditure and its purposes.

Mr. Norris: The increases in expenditure are:

(i) £3,513,000 for Eurocontrol arising from increased activity by Eurocontrol subsequent to the initial agreement on and preparation of 1993-94 provision;

(ii) £1,750,000 in connection with the privatisation of the DVOIT; and

(iii) £1,729,000 for capital expenditure mainly in connection with my Department's headquarters accommodation.

School Transport

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Education concerning the introduction of a requirement to provide a seat for each school child travelling on school journeys using minibuses, buses or coaches, and a seat belt for every seat; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and I have consulted my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education as part of our review of the technical and cost implications of fitting seat belts to all seats in all minibuses and coaches.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the European directives which apply to the design and construction of minibus, bus and coach regulations; and what action he intends to take to enable future harmonisation for the installation of seat belts in school minibuses, buses and coaches.

Mr. Key: A proposal for a draft directive on bus, coach and minibus construction is currently being discussed in a European Commission experts group. Other directives applying to these vehicles are set out in annex IV of directive 92/53/EEC, amending directive 70/156/EEC.

The European Commission announced in February its strategy for improving bus and coach safety: their objective is to agree the technical requirements for fitting seat belts to all seats in vehicles which do not carry standing passengers.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish details of the research he has commissioned relating to future installation of seat belts in school minibuses, buses and coaches used to transport school children; and what further research he intends to commission.

Mr. Key: The Department has conducted a good deal of research into the fitment of seat belts mainly in relation to cars. Much of this research has been published and can be used to inform policy on the fitment of seat belts in other vehicles. Further research projects into various aspects of bus and coach safety are planned for the near future, but contracts have not yet been let.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the current regulations which exist to regulate the driving of public service vehicles, including their drivers, and from which buses, minibuses or coaches transporting school children, could be exempt.

Mr. Key: The driving licence arrangements for passenger-carrying vehicles are contained in the Motor Vehicle (Driving Licences) (Large Goods and Passenger-Carrying) Vehicles) Regulations 1990 SI 1990 No. 2612.

Drivers of buses, minibuses or coaches transporting school children are only exempt from PCV licensing if they drive under the terms of permits granted under regulations made under section 19 of the Transport Act 1985. These are the Minibus and Other Section 19 Permit Buses Regulations 1987 SI 1987 No. 1230, the section 19 Minibus (Designated Bodies) Order 1987 SI 1987 No. 1229, and the Section 19 Minibus (Designated Bodies) (Amendment) Order 1990 SI 1990 No. 1708. But, in practice, most drivers of vehicles transporting school children do not make use of these permits as they are contracted-in from bus operators whose drivers hold full PCV entitlement.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will visit Strathclyde to discuss with Strathclyde council its reasons for banning the practice of seating three school children to a two-seater seat on buses and coaches used for school journeys.

Mr. Key: No. The Carrying Capacity Regulations permit three seated children under the age of 14 to share a double seat and count as two passengers. This is a concession and authorities and operators may take advantage of it as they think fit.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish details of the research he has commissioned in respect of the retrospective fitting of seat belts to minibuses, buses and coaches used to transport school children.

Mr. Key: The diversity of vehicle types used for school transport and the way in which they are constructed are such that research of this kind could not be undertaken economically.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning the installation and enforcement of the wearing of seat belts in minibuses, buses and coaches used as school buses.

Mr. Key: I have received a great many representations on this subject.

We are currently reviewing the full technical and cost implications of fitting seat belts to all seats in all minibuses and coaches, not just those used as school buses.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet the Belt Up School Kids organisation to discuss seat belt safety in buses, coaches and minibuses used for school journeys.

Mr. Key: Yes. I have agreed to meet representatives of the originating BUSK group.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what records he maintains of school buses checked and found not roadworthy; and if he will publish the results of such adverse tests *(a)* by local education authority area and *(b)* for each year since 1985.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 28 April 1994]:* There are no special arrangements for testing vehicles contracted to carry children to and from school. Like all coaches, buses and minibuses with more than eight passenger seats they must be tested one year after first being registered and annually thereafter. The arrangements for annual testing have not changed since 1985.

In addition VI staff also conduct roadside spot checks on all vehicle types. In 1992-93, the last full year for which figures are available, the vehicle inspectorate carried out almost 25,000 roadside spot checks on public service vehicles and issued immediate prohibitions, for dangerous defects, in 5·2 per cent. of cases. About one third of the PSV fleet is checked in this way annually and there are no plans to change that figure.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how frequently his Department's inspectorate carries out tests on vehicles contracted to transport children to and from school; what changes have been made to the arrangements for such tests since 1985; what reports of adverse results from spot checks he has received in 1994; what changes he plans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 28 April 1994]:* This information is unavailable. School buses are not a separate class of vehicle. Consequently the vehicle inspectorate, which is responsible for roadworthiness enforcement, does not maintain a separate record on the roadworthiness of these vehicles.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to bring the United Kingdom into line with other EC member states in regulations relating to drivers' records and tachographs in relation to school buses and minibuses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* The United Kingdom applies the EC regulations on drivers' hours and tachographs in respect of school buses and minibuses. I have no plans to change the present position.

Public Service Vehicles

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library details of the recent investigations undertaken by the traffic commissioners on the extent to which current public service vehicle regulations are being met.

Mr. Key: The annual reports of the traffic commissioners include commentary on investigations concerning public service vehicle operations. The latest set of reports covering the 1992-93 period were placed in the Library when published on 2 August last year.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with Eurotunnel regarding the delay in opening the channel tunnel; and what are the reasons for the delay.

Mr. Freeman: Opening of the tunnel for commercial services is a matter for Eurotunnel subject to authorisation by the Intergovernmental Commission under the terms of the concession agreement. I understand from the IGC that Eurotunnel has yet to complete some testing and commissioning work before a service can be authorised.

Lighthouses

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of personnel employed by *(a)* the Northern Lighthouse Board and *(b)* Trinity House on 1 January in (i) 1985, (ii) 1989, (iii) 1993 and (iv) 1994; and if he will indicate the distribution of employees between (1) headquarters administration, (2) lighthouse keeping and (3) providing logistical support for manned and automatic lighthouses, including service on lighthouse board vessels.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 27 April 1994]:* The numbers are:

	Headquarters administration	*Lighthouse keepers (including light vessel personnel)*	*Logistical support*
Northern Lighthouse Board			
1 January 1985	58	231	225
1 January 1989	51	202	207
1 January 1993	44	98	172
1 January 1994	42·5	87	163
Trinity House			
1 April 1985	184	438	806
1 April 1989	30	145	517
1 April 1993	27	117	511
1 April 1994	28	98	485

DEFENCE

AWE, Aldermaston

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the fires which occurred at the atomic weapons establishment, Aldermaston on 10 and 20 October 1993, listed as incident numbers 13390 and 14095 by Berkshire fire and rescue service.

Mr. Aitken: AWE does not hold a record of the incident numbers used by the Berkshire fire and rescue service, but, on 10 October 1993, a glove in contact with a laboratory hot plate smouldered causing activation of an automatic fire detection system. On 20 October 1993, a small high voltage electrical unit split resulting in an oil fire. Both incidents were quickly dealt with by the AWE fire service. Berkshire fire and rescue service was informed as a matter of routine.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress being made in negotiations with Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution regarding the cleaning up of the north area ponds at AWE Aldermaston; and if he will place in the Library copies of the reports detailing the extent of contamination of these ponds.

Mr. Aitken: AWE holds regular discussions with Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution on a range of environmental issues. The development of engineering options for water management, as well as cleaning up the contamination in the North Ponds, form part of these discussions. AWE safety division has undertaken a detailed radiological survey of the ponds which details the nature and the extent of the contamination, which is not of radiological concern and exists only in an access-controlled location. This survey is one of many that AWE undertakes for its own management purposes. It is not appropriate to place a copy of this report in the Library.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the policy of the AWE Aldermaston fire service towards providing reports of all fires that have occurred at the site to Berkshire fire and rescue service.

Mr. Aitken: The policy of the AWE Aldermaston fire service is to notify Berkshire fire and rescue service of all calls it receives. In addition to fires this will include automatic detection equipment false alarms and mistaken call-outs. Reports are provided to the Berkshire fire and rescue service where appropriate.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who is responsible for carrying out and paying for all decommissioning works carried out at AWE Aldermaston; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The MoD is responsible for the costs of decommissioning works carried out at AWE Aldermaston. Management of the decommissioning task is performed by Hunting-BRAE plc on behalf of the MoD, and decommissioning activities may be undertaken either by Hunting-BRAE directly or by suitable sub-contractors.

Mutual Defence Agreement

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next expects to conduct negotiations to amend or renew the agreement between Her Majesty's Government and the United States of America for co-operation on the uses of atomic energy for mutual defence purposes, originally agreed on 3 July 1958, treaty series No. 41 (1958), Command 537; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Discussions over an amendment to extend the validity of those articles of the agreement which expire on 31 December 1994 are currently taking place between officials.

Press Office, Plymouth

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the circumstances that led to the suspension from duty of Steven Wilmott and David Harris from his Department's press office in Plymouth.

Mr. Aitken: Messrs. Wilmott and Harris have been suspended on full pay following allegations and are now the subject of an internal departmental investigation.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the salary received and expenses claimed in 1992-93 and 1993-94 by Steven Wilmott and David Harris from his Department's press office in Plymouth.

Mr. Aitken: It is not my Department's practice to reveal details of payments made to individuals.

RAF Pilots (Leather Jackets)

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement about the military value to RAF pilots of wearing leather jackets;

(2) how many leather jackets have been provided for RAF pilots and aircrew in the past two years; and at what cost;

(3) whether leather jackets are part of the uniform for RAF pilots and aircrew.

Mr. Hanley: Leather jackets are an optional item of dress and are of no direct military value to RAF pilots. They are not therefore provided at public expense.

Detective Agencies

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department has spent on contracts with private detective agencies since 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: I am not aware of any expenditure by my Department on contracts with private detective agencies. I am aware, however, that the Treasury Solicitor's Department does sometimes employ inquiry agents when pursuing debtors of the MOD and other Government Departments. While such services are not paid for directly by my Department, they will be included in the final costs submitted by the Treasury Solicitor's Department.

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will take steps to make better known the work undertaken by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in maintaining the records, memorials and war graves of allied service people killed in two world wars.

Mr. Hanley: The Commonwealth War Graves Commission is responsible for arranging its own publicity. The MOD does, however, make a major financial contribution to the Commission's budget on behalf of Her Britannic Majesty's Government, which includes funds for publicity.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what was the British Government's

contribution to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in 1993-94; and what he proposes it will be in 1994-95;

(2) if he will set out the factors which led him to reduce the United Kingdom contribution to the funding of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission; and if he will now restore the money as part of the D-day commemoration.

Mr. Hanley: The United Kingdom's contribution to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission takes the form of a grant-in-aid, which is discussed annually between my Department and the CWGC. In 1993-94 the grant-in-aid to the CWGC was £21,390,295. Financial provision for 1994-95, which has been agreed with the commission, is £20,532,368. This will be supplemented by a substantial surplus of around £1,700,000 carried forward from the previous year.

The commission's budget, and our contributions to it, have increased by 50 per cent. in cash terms over the last five years. We believe that the level of funding is realistic in the light of the commission's future requirements. The commission has confirmed that it has no plans to cut any projects or commitments as a result.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what countries are now represented on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission; and what consultation he had with the Governments concerned before announcing to the commission his decision to cut its funding.

Mr. Hanley: The countries represented on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission are: the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, India, New Zealand and South Africa. As well as being represented on the commission, all member countries are represented on its finance committee which discusses funding.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the countries which contain Commonwealth war graves and memorials which are maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Mr. Hanley: The Ministry of Defence does not keep records of the nature requested, responsibility for which rests with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. I will arrange for the Director-General of the commission to write to the hon. Member.

Colonels in Chief

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what authority appointments of colonels in chief of Army regiments are made; what are the administrative arrangements for these appointments; what is the total cost of all aspects of the work of colonels in chief; what are the equivalent arrangements for the RAF and Royal Navy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Appointments of colonels in chief of Army regiments and corps are made by Her Majesty the Queen from recommendations submitted by the Army Board. The appointments are not salaried and involve only minimal costs incurred when visiting units. Such costs are borne by the Army, but are not separately identified and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Similar arrangements apply in both the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force.

Airlines (Military Transport)

Mr. Davidson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the Government's policy in respect of the criteria to be used in determining which airline should carry military personnel abroad.

Mr. Hanley: Wherever possible, military personnel are carried on Royal Air Force transport aircraft.

Where RAF aircraft are not available, or their use is not considered to be cost effective, movement may be carried out by commercial airlines. This can either take place under charter arrangements, as in the case of large numbers of passengers moving to a specific destination, such as Germany, or by use of specially negotiated fares with British, European and other airlines which are regularly monitored and renegotiated.

In determining which airline to use, it is my Department's practice to engage in competitive tendering and best value-for-money negotiations, taking full account of Department of Transport guidelines and EC services directives, as appropriate.

Friendly Fire

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what procedures were enforced after the friendly fire incident in the Gulf war, in which a British Warrior armoured car was hit, to prevent a repetition of such errors; and whether these were in place when two American helicopters were shot down recently by friendy fire in northern Iraq.

Mr. Hanley: Following the friendly fire incident in the Gulf conflict we have been working independently as well as in close consultation with the United States and our other NATO allies, on improvements to the management of combat indentification and the development of more advanced technology in support of this. The incident in northern Iraq on 14 April is the subject of a full United States inquiry in which the United Kingdom and other coalition partners are represented. The results of this inquiry will be reported to Parliament as soon as possible, and it is therefore inapopropriate at this point to attempt to draw parallels between the two incidents.

Civil Servants (Business Appointments)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many civil servants in his Department applied in each year since 1986 through the business appointments system to take up an outside appointment *(a)* as an independent consultant, *(b)* in a firm of consultants and *(c)* in other employment; how many were referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments; and how many were granted.

Mr. Aitken: Business appointment records are not maintained in a format which enables applications to join firms of consultants to be identified separately. Such applications are included under "Other Employment".

	Number of applications	Independent consultants	Other Employment	Referred to ACBA	Approved by ACBA
1986	357	32	325	1	1
1987	228	6	222	8	8
1988	256	10	246	1	1
1989	320	5	315	2	2
1990	181	45	136	7	7
1991	134	36	98	7	7
1992	219	113	106	2	2
1993	160	109	51	3	3

Note: Only applications from officers at Grades 1 and 2 are referred to the Advisory Panel on Business Appointments, chaired by Lord Carlisle.

Sentries

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is his policy relating to the deployment of service personnel on sentry duty who are under investigation regarding *(a)* possible crimes of violence and *(b)* possible drugs-related offences; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is his policy relating to the provision of weapons for service personnel on sentry duty who are under investigation regarding *(a)* possible crimes of violence and *(b)* possible drugs-related offences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Decisions on the deployment of service personnel on day-to-day duties, including sentry duty, are a matter for the commanding officer of the individual concerned. Where an individual is under investigation regarding crimes of violence or drug-related offences, the seriousness of the alleged offence will be taken into account when deciding whether the individual should continue to undertake sentry duty or other duties, armed or otherwise. It would be normal practice, however, for personnel under investigation for serious offences to be held under close arrest. Where a less serious offence is concerned it might be considered appropriate for an individual to continue normal duties, but under supervision.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Community Care Grants

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people made an application in respect of community care grants and loans from the social fund system at each of the social security offices between 1 April 1988 and 31 March 1994; of these how many were accepted; how much was paid out; how many were refused; and what were the reasons for refusal.

Mr. Ancram: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Alec Wylie. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. Wylie to Mr. Eddie McGrady, dated 28 April 1994:

I have been asked o reply to your recent Parliamentary Question relating to Social Fund statistics.

I am sorry I am unable to provide information in the form you have requested as:

information is not readily available in the period 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1990 and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost;

details for each Social Security Office can only be given for the 1990-91 year. As the Social Fund has been managed on a District basis from April 1991 information has been supplied accordingly;

an individual can make more than one application to the Social Fund the figures shown therefore refer to the number of applications received rather than number of people making application;

information on the number of refusals is only held as a percentage of decisions made;

information is not held on the reasons for refusal of applications. The available information is set out in the tables, which are too long to be printed in the Official Report and arrangements will be made for a copy to be deposited in the Library. Statistics on Social Fund applications is also available in the Library under "Social Fund Data" and these figures are updated on a monthly basis.

I hope that you will find this information helpful.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is *(a)* the average time and *(b)* the range of times taken to process a review case for disability living allowance.

Mr. Ancram: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Alec Wylie. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. Wylie to Mr. Eddie McGrady, dated 28 April 1994:

I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question on the average and range of times taken to process a review case for Disability Living Allowance.

I am sorry that information on the processing of Disability Living Allowance review cases is not held in the format that you have requested. The procedure is that each year I set targets for the time taken to clear review cases. For the 1993-94 year these were:

60% of cases to be cleared in 55 days and
80% to be cleared in 75 days.

Unfortunately the Agency has been unable to meet these targets. By the end of the 1993-94 year 22% of cases had been cleared within 55 days and 32% within 75 days. The reason for the failure to achieve the targets is that the number of requests for review far exceeded expectations and, by September 1993, there was a backlog of about 8,000 cases awaiting decision. Extra staff were recruited to deal with this and with the use of extensive overtime most of the outstanding cases were cleared by February 1994.

I hope you find this information helpful.

Civil Servants (Business Appointments)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many civil servants in his Department applied in each year since 1986 through the business appointments system to take up an outside appointment *(a)* as an independent consultant, *(b)* in a firm

of consultants and *(c)* in other employment; how many were referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments; and how many were granted.

Sir John Wheeler: Civil servants applied to take up outside appointments in the following years:

Year	*Independent consultant*	*Firm of consultants*	*Other employment*
1986	1	—	—
1988	—	1	1
1989	—	1	1
1991	1	—	2
1992	1	—	1
1993	—	—	1

Three of the above applications were referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments. All of the above applications were granted.

Energy Co-operation

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met Ministers from *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the Republic of Ireland to discuss co-operation in the provision and distribution of energy; and if he will make a statement about energy co-operation between Northern Ireland and both Scotland and the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: Regular discussions take place with Scottish Ministers on a wide range of issues including energy. Energy matters, particularly electricity, have been discussed with Ministers from the Republic of Ireland from time to time. I continue to support any co-operation in energy matters which may bring benefit to Northern Ireland.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food (Expenditure)

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the net disposable income per person in pounds sterling; what was the expenditure on food *(a)* as a percentage of net disposable income and *(b)* in pounds sterling in (i) each European Union country, (ii) Sweden, (iii) Norway, (iv) Austria, (v) Finland, (vi) the United States of America and (vii) Japan in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Jack: The information is given in the table.

The following comparable information is available for 1991:

	Household expenditure per person[1] (£)	*Expenditure on food[2] per person (£)*	*Expenditure on food as a percentage of household expenditure (per cent.)*
Belgium	6,614	1,062	16
Denmark	7,368	1,087	15
Germany	7,397	[4]1,453	20
Greece	2,780	867	31
Spain	4,795	914	19
France	7,187	1,162	16
Ireland	3,776	805	21
Italy	6,993	1,250	18
Netherlands	6,529	798	12
Portugal	2,127	n/a	[5]34
United Kingdom	6,207	766	12
Sweden	8,156	1,291	16
Norway	7,175	1,406	20
Austria	6,516	1,106	17
Finland	7,439	1,186	16
USA	[3]8,423	831	10
Japan	8,555	[5]1,162	14

[1] Final consumption expenditure of resident households.
[2] Within the household except where stated otherwise.
[3] Includes expenditure by private non profit making institutions.
[4] Includes alcoholic drink and meals out.
[5] Includes alcoholic drink and tobacco.
[6] 1986.

Sources: EUROSTAT National Accounts ESA 1970-91.
OECD National Accounts 1979-91.

Colorado Beetle

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent reports she received of Colorado beetle *(a)* unsolicited and *(b)* in response to requests for information; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: We have received 25 reports so far this year of Colorado beetle in England, of which nine were as a result of inspections undertaken by the plant health and seeds inspectorate. This brings the total number of beetles found to 44.

The United Kingdom is a protected zone under the EC single market arrangements for plant health, and Colorado beetle is accordingly a notifiable quarantine pest in the United Kingdom under the Plant Health (Great Britain) Order 1993. Each year we launch a publicity campaign to heighten public awareness about the pest. This has led to a good response from processors, traders and members of the public in notifying findings.

No breeding colony has been found in the United Kindom since one in 1976. The colony was successfully eradicated.

Halal Meat Company, Birmingham

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many *(a)* dead and *(b)* recumbent animals have been delivered to the Halal Meat Company in Birmingham in each of the last 12 months; what was the country of origin of those animals; and how many prosecutions are being brought in respect of those animals which were deemed unfit for transit.

Mr. Soames: The information requested is set out in the table. The figures are indicative of the problems of handling this category of sheep. Prosecutions are a matter for the local authorities concerned; I understand that none is pending in respect of animals which were deemed unfit for transport.

Dead in transit and down in transit sheep
Birmingham Halal slaughterhouses

Month and origin	Dead	Recumbent
1993 April—Local	20	38
May—Wales and Local	15	30
June—Wales and Local	18	28
July—Wales and Local	16	20
August—Wales, Scotland and Local	10	15
September—Wales, Scotland and Local	12	18
October—Wales, Scotland and Local	16	20
November—Wales, Scotland and Local	10	21
December—Wales and Scotland	7	19
1994 January—Wales and Local	12	44
February—Local	11	33
March—2 Irish, 1 Polish, 2 Spanish, 30 Local	13	35
1994 April to 26 April—Local	18	31

Notes:
1. Total annual throughput approximately 36,000 sheep.
2. 'Dead in Transit' includes some that arrived alive but died overnight in lairage.
3. 'Recumbent' includes some which walked off the lorry but collapsed overnight.

Fisheries

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if the protection against special access to the North sea in the accession arrangements extend to non-pressure stocks;

(2) whether Spanish and Portuguese fishing vessels will be allowed to fish in the North sea under article VII of the treaty of Rome after 1 January 1996;

(3) to what extent the Spanish and Portuguese will be integrated into the common fisheries policy by 1 January 1996; and whether they will be able to fish in all European Union waters.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if she will give details of proposals of fisheries management agreed or tabled at the April European Union Council of Fisheries Ministers relating to *(a)* the possible replacement of the Irish box and *(b)* the restricted list of 300 Spanish fishing vessels; and if she will make a statement;

(2) if she will detail proposals agreed or tabled at the April European Union Council of Fisheries Ministers relating to access by Spanish fishing vessels into *(a)* the Irish sensitive zone, *(b)* west of Scotland fishing grounds, *(c)* International Council for the Exploration of the Seas area VII, *(d)* the North sea pressure stocks fishery and *(e)* the North sea non-pressure stocks fishery; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Members to the reply given to my hon. Friend, the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) on 13 April 1994, *Official Report*, columns *183-84*.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assurance she gave in Strasbourg to the British fishing industry about Spanish fishing rights in *(a)* the North sea and *(b)* the Irish box after January 1996.

Mr. Jack: Neither the Minister nor I have visited Strasbourg recently.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the United Kingdom vote in relation to granting a full concession of fishing rights to Spain under the common fisheries policy at the last Fisheries Council.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) on 25 April 1994, *Official Report*, column *79*.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received from fishing industry representatives regarding the possibilities of a permit system for the Irish sensitive zone.

Mr. Jack: Officials are to meet representatives of the fishing industry shortly to discuss proposals which the Commission has made for a general system of fishing permits.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the declared policy position of each other European Union member state with regard to fisheries effort control in the Irish sensitive zone.

Mr. Jack: The Commission is to make proposals for the zone, inter alia, by 1 June 1994. Consequently, the position of other member states is not yet known.

Sheep and Lamb Exports

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what tonnage of domestically reared lamb and sheep was exported for each year since 1979; to which countries; and in what form.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 27 April 1994]:* Export data specifically referring to domestically reared lamb and sheep are not available. Total exports of lamb and sheep from the United Kingdom, by destination and form, for years 1979 to 1993, are shown in the following table.

Exports of sheep and sheepmeat
1979 to 1993

Metric tonnes

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	[1]1993
Live sheep and lambs															
All countries	17,261	14,281	8,026	5,833	4,348	3,564	2,990	5,857	12,767	17,835	22,451	22,225	33,040	52,051	30,712
EC	17,222	14,273	7,934	5,810	4,333	3,555	2,960	5,785	12,760	17,809	22,436	22,217	33,023	51,993	30,709
Of which:															
Belgium/Luxembourg	1,429	1,517	2,689	1,108	993	—	655	482	70	342	981	258	1,568	3,071	3,572
Germany[2]	6,257	6,770	1,977	1,136	1,993	1,111	—	161	—	132	467	—	143	1,830	1,060
Irish Republic	9,377	5,623	907	2,169	1,326	1,856	1,662	905	1,921	2,071	2,909	3,133	3,704	2,540	10
France	—	—	2,297	1,394	—	—	—	4,047	10,701	15,175	17,645	18,733	26,943	43,250	24,193
Non-EC	39	8	92	23	15	9	30	72	7	26	15	8	17	58	3

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	[1]1993
Meat of sheep and lambs[2]—Fresh/chilled/frozen															
All countries	40,922	36,949	37,531	37,041	43,317	47,330	48,701	60,019	71,188	75,985	89,180	79,697	79,960	105,146	95,059
EC	36,630	33,304	32,601	34,676	39,851	44,239	44,441	57,134	68,643	73,689	86,725	77,371	77,810	103,173	92,684
Of which:															
Belgium/Luxembourg	14,126	13,704	6,103	5,584	4,120	4,053	5,983	7,016	7,904	8,068	8,539	8,936	9,362	9,615	10,315
Germany[3]	13,593	13,647	5,138	5,521	4,529	2,977	2,453	2,889	2,544	3,054	3,662	2,784	2,118	4,882	4,174
France	5,107	3,466	19,797	22,246	29,953	35,625	34,550	43,937	53,865	56,625	66,402	55,229	53,383	72,410	65,147
Italy	2,361	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2,262	2,796	2,339	3,502	4,477	4,624	3,849
Spain	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3,822	5,223	1,565	8,380	5,838
Non-EC	4,292	3,645	4,930	2,365	3,466	3,091	4,260	2,885	2,545	2,296	2,455	2,326	2,150	1,973	2,375
Of which:															
Switzerland	1,630	1,529	1,508	1,943	2,271	2,158	2,560	2,450	2,170	1,964	2,177	1,928	1,882	1,557	1,845

[1] Data for 1993 are provisional and subject to revision.
[2] Data pre-1991 covers the Federal Republic only.
[3] Data pre-1988 also includes meat of goats.

Sources:
CSO/Department of Trade Annual Publication of Overseas Trade Statistics and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Civil Servants (Business Appointments)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many civil servants in her Department applied each year since 1986 through the business appointments system to take up an outside appointment *(a)* as an independent consultant *(b)* in a firm of consultants and *(c)* in other employment; how many were referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments; and how many were granted.

Mr. Jack: The following is a table of statistics showing the number of civil servants in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who have applied in each year since 1986 through the business appointments scheme to take up an outside appointment.

There have not been any applications which have required referral to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments during the period 1986 to the present date.

Table showing number of civil servants in MAFF who have applied, since 1986 through the Business Appointments Scheme to take up an outside appointment

	1986[1]		1987		1988	
	Number of applications	*Number approved*	*Number of applications*	*Number approved*	*Number of applications*	*Number approved*
(a) as an independent consultant	—	—	3	3	5	5
(b) in a firm of consultants	—	—	—	—	—	—
(c) other employment	—	—	8	8	7(3)	7(3)
Total	13	13	11	11	12(3)[2]	12(3)[2]

[1] Information not immediately available with regard to (a), (b) and (c).
[2] Non-executive director.

	1989		1990		1991	
	Number of applications	*Number approved*	*Number of applications*	*Number approved*	*Number of applications*	*Number approved*
(a) as an independent consultant	3	3	2	2	3	3
(b) in a firm of consultants	1	1	1	1	1	1
(c) other employment	5	4	9	9	6	6
Total	9	8	12	12	10	10

	1992		1993		1994[3]	
	Number of applications	*Number approved*	*Number of applications*	*Number approved*	*Number of applications*	*Number approved*
(a) as an independent consultant	8	8	8	8	6	6
(b) in a firm of consultants	1	1	1	1	—	—
(c) other employment	6	6	9	9	2	2
Total	15	15	18	18	8	8

[3] Statistics as at 31 March 1994.

Note:
There have been 3 applications which have required referral to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments during the period 1986 to the present date and all were successful and are included in the figures relating to 1988 and 1990.

Animal Diseases

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which European countries presently have cases of *(a)* foot and mouth disease, *(b)* African swine

fever, *(c)* classical swine fever, *(d)* swine vesicular disease and *(e)* Aujeszky's disease; when she last met and what consultations she has had with the east Yorkshire and national NFU over preventing these diseases from entering Britain; what measures she is taking to prevent these diseases entering the country; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The information requested is set out in the table.

My right hon. Friend keeps in close touch with the President of the NFU and its regions about all matters of current interest, including measures to help prevent the introduction and spread of disease by imported farm livestock. A number of such measures are set out in my reply to the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) on 1 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *590*. Similar measures apply to pigs, including checking all imported pigs to keep out the threat of Aujeszky's disease. These measures are kept under constant review and the number of checks is intensified in the light of perceived disease risks.

Incidence of disease in Europe: 1994 to date

Foot and Mouth disease	*African Swine fever*	*Classical Swine fever*	*Swine Vesicular disease*	*Aujeszky's disease*
—	Italy (Sardinia) Spain	Belgium Bulgaria Estonia Germany Italy Poland former Republic of Yugoslavia (including Macedonia) Slovak Republic	Italy Netherlands	*See note below*

Source: Office International des Épizooties (OIE).

Note:

Aujeszky's disease is not compulsorily notifiable in all EC Member States and information on its prevalence is not readily available. However, within the EC only Denmark, Great Britain and certain Departments in France are recognised as being free of Aujeszky's disease.

Beef

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence she has for her statement that a promotion of Scotch whisky in a German chain of food shops was cancelled as a result of the stance of the German Government towards British beef.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* I have been informed by Food From Britain's overseas division in Germany that concerns over bovine spongiform encephalopathy have created general difficulties in arranging promotions of British products.

EC Surplus Foods

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many *(a)* independent and *(b)* grant-maintained schools have received free surplus food products from the EC since April 1989 and what was its market value;

(2) how many *(a)* independent and *(b)* grant-maintained schools have received free surplus stewing steak from the European Community since April 1993; and what was the total market value of the surplus stewing steak provided.

Mr. Jack: Independent and grant-maintained schools are not eligible for produce distributed under the EC surplus food scheme.

Fisheries Management

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultations *(a)* have taken place and *(b)* are proposed with fishing industry representatives regarding a fisheries management regime for the Irish sensitive zone; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: I have maintained close contact with representatives of the fishing industry about all aspects of the review of Spanish and Portuguese accession arrangements and will continue to do so.

Food Labelling

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action she is taking to improve the accuracy of the labelling of foods with particular reference to the list of contents.

Mr. Soames: Rules on ingredient listing on food labels are harmonised in the European Community. The United Kingdom has pressed for a review of the current exemptions and the Commission is considering this.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will require the labelling of meat which has already been thawed and then refrozen and ensure that the consumer is warned not to refreeze.

Mr. Soames: Such labelling is currently required. We are consulting interested parties about a proposal to amend this requirement, since the warning cannot be justified on safety grounds.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board's timetable for the comprehensive labelling of food produce.

Mr. Atkins: I have been asked to reply.

The United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board was established under the European Communities Act to administer and promote the EC ecolabelling scheme in the United Kingdom. The scheme does not apply to food and, therefore, the United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board has no plans for labelling food produce.

SCOTLAND

Public Bodies

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in respect of which non-elected bodies whose membership in whole or in part is appointed by him in each case *(a)* meetings are open to the public, *(b)* there is scrutiny of financial procedures by independently appointed audit and *(c)* there are rules governing the declaration of interests.

Mr. Lang: Non-departmental public bodies are not required to hold meetings in public and do not normally do so. The Comptroller and Auditor General either audits the accounts of, or has inspection rights to, all executive non-departmental public bodies for which I am responsible and which receive Government funding. Where he is not the auditor, the accounts of the body are audited in accordance with the statutory requirements of its constitution. I take into account the question of the interests of possible chairmen and members of the boards of executive NDPBs when I am considering appointments to a body. Arrangements for the declaration of interest of members on specific items under consideration by the body are normal practice; detailed arrangements vary depending on the body.

The meetings of Scottish health boards and NHS trusts are open to the public. The Health Education Board for Scotland and the National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting for Scotland also hold public meetings. They are subject to audit by either the Scottish Office audit unit or external auditors appointed by the Secretary of State for Scotland. The Comptroller and Auditor General has a statutory requirement to examine, certify and report on summarised accounts of these bodies and can examine the accounts of individual bodies and any records relating to them. NHS authorities and trusts have rules governing the declaration of interests.

Police Officers (Illness)

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many days work have been lost by police officers due to illness in Scotland in each of the last five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 27 April 1994]:* The information is set out in the table.

Year	*Number of days lost due to illness*
1989	175,409
1990	297,431
1991	172,501
1992	176,274
1993	170,693

Prison Vandalism

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost of repairing damage resulting from vandalism by prisoners in each Scottish prison for each of the past five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 27 April 1994]:* Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Scottish Prison Service under the chief executive, Mr. E. W. Prizzell. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Mr. John McFall, dated 3 May 1994:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your Question about the cost of repairing damage resulting from vandalism by prisoners in each Scottish prison.

Vandalism by prisoners ranges from minor incidents such as breaking light bulbs to serious riot damage. Damage of a minor nature caused by vandalism would normally be repaired as part of the on-going maintenance programme and the cost would not therefore be separately identified.

The cost of prisoner damage from major incidents which have occurred in each of the past 5 years is set out in the table below.

Cost (£)

Establishment	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*	*Total*
Corston Vale	—	—	—	—	1,818	1,818
Dumfries	2,295	5,762	—	—	—	8,057
Glenochil	—	—	—	—	25,550	25,550
Longriggend	—	—	3,180	—	—	3,180
Low Moss	—	6,008	—	—	—	6,008
Perth	—	—	36,074	—	—	36,074
Shotts	10,510	44,825	32,302	4,865	183,045	275,547
Total	12,805	56,595	71,556	4,865	210,413	356,234

Prisoners (Home Leave)

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prisoners in Scotland have been granted home leave in each of the past five years; and how many prisoners have absconded or committed crimes while on home leave from Scottish prisons.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 27 April 1994]:* Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Scottish Prison Service under its chief executive Mr. E. W. Prizzell. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Mr. John McFall, dated 3 May 1994:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your Question about the number of prisoners in Scotland who have been granted home leave in each of the last 5 years; and how many prisoners have absconded or committed crimes whilst on home leave from Scottish Prisons.

The information requested on the number of prisoners who have absconded while on home leave is published in the Scottish Prison Service Annual Report and is as follows:

Year	Prisoners	Young offenders
1989-90	29	12
1990-91	49	20
1991-92	52	14
1992-93	54	34
1993-94	40	30

The other information requested is not held centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Death Certificates

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the current cost of a death certificate in each hospital; and what guidelines have been issued on the amount charged;

(2) by how much the charge for a death certificate has risen since April 1992;

(3) what was the income to hospitals in 1993 from charges for death certificates;

(4) what is the normal administrative cost of providing a death certificate.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 April 1994]:* Hospitals make no charge for providing a certificate of the cause of death. If a body is to be cremated, there is a statutory requirement for the cause of death to be certified by two independent doctors in order to guard against the possibility of concealment of crime. The completion of cremation certificates does not fall within the scope of services required from doctors under the National Health Service Acts and they are therefore entitled to charge a fee. Doctors are guided on the level of such fees by the British Medical Association. The recommended fee is currently £32 per certificate; the recommended fee in April 1992 was £30.

Children (Principal Carers)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate how many children are the principal carers for sick or disabled parents or close relatives.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 April 1994]:* The information requested is not held centrally.

Nursery Places

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of children under five-years-old have a place in a local authority-provided facility.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 April 1994]:* It is estimated that 57,600 children under five years had places in local authority education or day care establishments at 31 March 1992. This represents approximately 18 per cent. of children under five. Such places however are used mostly by three and four-year-olds. Many children under five have places in private or voluntary facilities.

Homeless Children

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many children were taken into care in Scotland because of homelessness, in each of the 10 years preceeding the implementation of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* The Homeless Person's Act came into force on 1 April 1978. The available information about the numbers of children taken into care because of homelessness between 1969 —the earliest year for which information is available—and 1974 are as follows. Following reorganisation, the available figures for the years 1976-78 relate to children in care on census day who were admitted to care due to family homelessness.

Number of children taken into care because of homelessness in calendar year

Year	Number
[1]1969	526
1970	625
1971	756
1972	774
1973	670
1974	577

[1] Year to 30 November.

Number of children in care on 31 March (census date)

Year	Number
1976	502
1977	493
1978	496

Scottish Children's Hospice

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet Endell Laird, the editor in chief of the *Scottish Daily Record* and *Sunday Mail,* to discuss the provisions of a Scottish children's hospice; what is his policy on such a meeting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* My right hon. Friend welcomes the support which the *Daily Record* has provided for the establishment of a children's hospice in Scotland, but has no plans at present to discuss this with Mr. Laird. I understand that the plans of the Children's Hospice Association Scotland for the establishment of a hospice serving the whole of Scotland are well advanced.

Voluntary Organisation Grants

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which voluntary organisations for deaf people have been awarded grants by his Department in each year since 1990; what commitments he has made for the financial year 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* The following voluntary organisations have been awarded grants over the period 1990-91 to 1994-95.

For 1994-95 I was particularly pleased to be able to offer funding to the Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters and the Scottish Association for the Deaf on a three-year basis; to offer an additional grant to Sense Scotland towards the establishment of a day centre at Overbridge centre for children and young adults with multiple handicaps and to offer the Royal National Institute for Deaf People a three-year grant towards the development of a network of communication support units in Scotland. In addition to the organisations listed, funding

is also provided to a wide range of voluntary organisations for people with physical disabilities which also have regard to the needs of deaf people.

Voluntary organisations for deaf people receiving grant

1990-91
Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters
The Scottish Association for the Deaf
Sense Scotland
Donaldson's College for the Deaf

1991-92
Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters
The Scottish Association for the Deaf
Sense Scotland
Donaldson's College for the Deaf

1992-93
Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters
The Scottish Association for the Deaf
Sense Scotland
Donaldson's College for the Deaf
British Deaf Association

1993-94
Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters
The Scottish Association for the Deaf
Sense Scotland
Donaldson's College for the Deaf
British Deaf Association
Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People

1994-95
Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters
The Scottish Association for the Deaf
Sense Scotland
Donaldson's College for the Deaf
The Royal National Institute for Deaf People

General Practitioners

Mr. Davidson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what current NHS rules and practice enable the age of the patient to be taken into account by a general practitioner or a general practitioner practice, when determining whether to accept a new patient on to their lists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* None. Guidance issued by the General Medical Council in May 1992 makes it clear to general practitioners that it is unacceptable to discriminate against groups of patients on grounds of their age, sex, sexual orientation, race, colour, religious belief, perceived economic worth or the amount of work they are likely to generate by virtue of their clinical condition.

Sheltered Housing

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to provide additional resources for the construction and development of sheltered housing in Paisley, Johnstone and Elderslie.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* Renfrew district council has received substantial capital allocations of £18·5 million for investment in public sector housing in 1994-95. Scottish Homes plans to invest a further £20 million in Renfrew district. It is for the local authority and Scottish Homes to determine the amount of these resources to be spent on providing sheltered housing in accordance with their assessment of local needs.

Royal Alexandra Hospital

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he has visited the Royal Alexandra hospital in Paisley since its construction; when he next plans to visit it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has not visited the Royal Alexandra hospital, and has no plans to do so.

Aids to Sleep

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what restrictions are in place on advertising drugs available without prescription which are designed to aid sleep; what checks are carried out to ensure that addictive or potentially harmful drugs are not advertised for mass consumption; what health warnings should be given in such advertisements; in what ways regulations or guidelines on the advertisement of such drugs have been amended or relaxed within the past five years; what plans he has to introduce new legislation, statutory orders or guidelines to regulate the promotion of aids to sleep which are available without prescription; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* Licensed medicines may be advertised only under the stringent controls of the Medicines Act 1968 and supporting regulations. These ensure that the advertising is in accordance with the product licence and is not misleading. Products which are available without prescription may be advertised to the public, in compliance with the Medicines (Labelling and Advertising to the Public) Regulations 1978. These regulations prohibit the advertising of a treatment for sleeplessness or insomnia; advertising for the relief of temporary sleeplessness is not prohibited.

Medicines which we consider to be addictive or potentially harmful when used without medical supervision are available only on prescription and may not be advertised to the public. Proposed legislation to amend the 1978 regulations in order to implement Council directive 92/28/EEC is currently under consideration.

Hospitals (Administration)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total cost of administration in hospitals in 1991, 1992 and 1993; and what is the forecast for 1994.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* In 1991-92 and 1992-93 hospital services administration costs were £173,769,000 and £204,885,000 respectively. The figures for 1993-94 are not yet available. It is not possible to forecast the figures for 1993-94 or 1994-95 as no data are held centrally.

Two factors have largely contributed to the increase shown. As part of the NHS reforms, Scottish health boards have devolved many of their functions to directly managed units and NHS trusts. The figures also include an increasing number of senior nurses and clinicians who have transferred to the general/senior managers' pay scales.

Formaldehyde

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when checks were last carried out on the level of emission of formaldehyde from Strathclyde chemical works in Johnstone; how the checks compared to the current maximum legal levels; what assessment he has made of whether the current emission levels from the factory pose no short-term or long-term threat to the health and wellbeing of neighbours; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* Strathclyde Chemical Company Limited is registered with Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate in respect of the manufacture of formaldehyde at its premises in Johnstone. As the operator of a registerable process, the company is required to use the best practicable means for preventing the emission of formaldehyde and for rendering harmless and inoffensive any formaldehyde which may be emitted. In pursuance of that duty the company makes regular weekly measurements of formaldehyde emissions and such measurements are subject to scrutiny by the inspectorate. The results confirm that the quantities of formaldehyde emitted are small and of no significance in public health terms.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the current regulations relating to the emission levels of formaldehyde; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* Processes involving the manufacture or use of formaldehyde are prescribed processes in terms of the Environmental Protection (Prescribed Processes and Substances) Regulations 1991 and are subject to the integrated pollution control provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Some existing processes which have not yet been brought within integrated pollution control remain subject to section 5 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 as regards emissions into the atmosphere. Guidance on the emission limits for processes involving formaldehyde has been provided in the chief inspector's guidance note, IPR 4/3 —"Processes for the Production or Use of Acetylene, Aldehydes etc"—copies of which are available from HMSO.

Prisoners

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many children had to be cared for other than in their own home following their mother's imprisonment, in the latest year for which information is available.

Mr. Stewart: The information in respect of children whose mothers were imprisoned is not available centrally. During 1991, the latest full year for which information is available, 39 children were taken into the care of local authorities following the imprisonment of one or both of their parents.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many and what percentage of prisoners had dependent children living with them just before imprisonment; and of these what number and percentage are mothers.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the number and percentage of prisoners and 17 to 20-year-old offenders who had been in care before they were 16 years.

Mr. Stewart: Information is not available centrally on which a reliable estimate of the number and percentage requested could be based.

Mental Health (Children)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the number of children in Scotland with mental health problems.

Mr. Stewart: This information is not available. However, research studies conducted elsewhere in the United Kingdom suggest that up to 10 per cent. of children suffer from a significant degree of emotional or behavioural disturbance during their childhood.

Children

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the number of children in Scotland who go hungry every day.

Mr. Stewart: Such information about children in families is not available centrally. However, it is Government policy to target income support and other DSS benefits at those who are most in need, including low income families.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the percentage of children in Scotland who are overweight.

Mr. Stewart: This information is not available.

Speech and Language Therapists

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many vacancies currently exist for speech and language therapists in the national health service in Scotland; what was the average length of time taken, over the past 12 months, to fill vacancies; and what assessment he has made of whether these vacancies are the result of a shortfall of appropriately qualified personnel.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is not available from records held centrally.

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what has been the annual turnover rate for *(a)* male and *(b)* female speech and language therapists in each health board in each year since 1980;

(2) how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female speech and language therapists have been appointed by each health board for each year since 1980.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested could be made available only at disproportionate cost. Figures relating to males plus females for some of the years sought are published in "Health Briefing No. 92/01/spth", a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library.

Hoax Calls

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prosecutions resulted from hoax calls to the fire services in Scotland for each of the past five years: and what percentage they constituted of the total number of call outs.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Relevant information for the four years 1989 to 1992 is as follows:

	1989	1990	1991	1992
Persons proceeded against under section 31 of the Fire Services Act 1947.	58	49	70	61
Persons with charge proved under section 31 of the Fire Services Act 1947.	55	41	64	57
Malicious false alarms attended by fire brigades.	13,795	15,241	18,481	22,485
Total incidents attended by fire brigades.	96,124	98,763	112,196	113,102
Malicious false alarms as a percentage of total incidents.	14·35	15·43	16·47	19·88

Notes:
1. Information for 1993 is not yet available.
2. Information on prosecutions for 1988 is not available on the same basis.

Drug Offences

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of 14 to 17-year-olds cautioned, fined, or given custodial sentences for drug offences in each year since 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Cautioning offenders is not a disposal which is available to the police in Scotland.

The available information is given in the table.

Number of persons aged 14 to 17 years old with a charge proved for drug offences in Scottish courts by type of disposal

Year	Custody	Fined	Other	Total
1987	12	90	20	122
1988	11	74	32	177
1989	6	81	28	115
1990	10	130	65	205
1991	14	194	81	289
1992	18	212	88	318

Source: Home Office.

Asthma

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the number and percentage of children in Scotland with asthma.

Mr. Stewart: Asthma can best be defined as a disease caused by variable narrowing of the bronchial airways as a result of inflammation. The condition covers a wide spectrum of severity, however, from a single wheeze to a life-threatening attack. Measure of prevalence is therefore difficult, as the precise definition used is of critical importance. The evidence from a number of recent United Kingdom epidemiological surveys suggests, however, that between 10 and 15 per cent. of children suffer from asthma at some point during their childhood.

Neither the surveys nor routine statistics provide a sufficient basis for an estimate to be made of the number of children suffering from asthma at any given time. However, in Scotland in 1992—the latest year for which the information is available—the number of children aged under 16 with a principal diagnosis of asthma severe enough for them to be admitted to hospital was 3,548.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many working days were lost in Scotland because of asthma in the latest 12 months for which information is available.

Mr. Stewart: This information is not available.

Crime Statistics

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the number of crimes in a year not reported to the police.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The best estimate we have is from the Scottish crime survey. The first results of the 1993 survey, which were published on 22 April, suggest that the proportion of incidents reported to the police in 1992 for those crimes covered by the survey, which comprise crimes against persons and their property, was 52 per cent. The corresponding figures for 1981 and 1987 were 38 per cent. and 44 per cent. respectively. These figures suggest that the amount of crime not reported to the police has diminished over the period covered by the surveys.

Children (Accidents)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total cost in 1992 and 1993 to the national health service and the ambulance service in Scotland caused by accidents to children.

Mr. Stewart: This information is not available.

Respite Care

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of children with severe disabilities do not receive respite care.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is not held centrally.

Our White Paper "Scotland's Children"—Cm. 2286—acknowledged the importance of well planned respite care tailored to the individual needs of children and their families. Respite care will feature in the new child care plans which local authorities will be required to prepare in collaboration with other relevant agencies, voluntary organisations and representatives of parents and carers.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the base locations of all accident and emergency ambulances in Strathclyde and Dumfries and Galloway; and which are *(a)* single manned or *(b)* double manned.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 27 April 1994]:* The locations of ambulance stations are as follows:

Ambulance Stations within Strathclyde

Greenock
Rothesay
Dunoon

Tighnabruich
Vale of Leven
Arrochar
Helensburgh
Lochgilphead
Tarbert
Bowmore
Campbeltown
Gigha (Contractor)
Oban
Dalmally
Inveraray
Mull
Colonsay (Contractor)
Tiree (Contractor)
Ayr
Dalmellington
Girvan
Kilbirnie
Largs
Millport
Lamlash
Irvine
Kilmarnock
Cumnock
Glasgow Central
Glasgow South
Glasgow East
Glasgow West
Kirkintilloch
Law
Shotts
Biggar
Douglas

Ambulance Stations within Dumfries and Galloway

Dumfries
Thornhill
Kirkconnel
Annan
Langholm
Lockerbie
Moffat
Newcastleton
Stranraer
Newton Stewart
Castle Douglas

We are committed to the double-manning of accident and emergency ambulances. We have made £6 million available over the last four years towards the elimination of single-manning.

Only those stations staffed by contractors are exclusively single-manned. At other stations the number of single-manned responses will depend on the level of "on-call" single-manned rostering and the incidence of short notice sickness absence. The percentage of single-manned responses across Scotland has fallen from 8·7 per cent. in 1990-91 to 1·75 per cent. in 1993-94. In Dumfries and Galloway during the same period there was a reduction from 28·97 per cent. to 6·14 per cent.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of accident and emergency ambulances achieved response times within the maximum in *(a)* Ayrshire and *(b)* Dumfries and Galloway in 1993 and for all available months in 1994.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 27 April 1994]:* Target response times for ambulances vary according to population density. Ayrshire and Arran and Dumfries and Galloway health boards both cover areas of medium density and sparse density. The target response times which apply are:

Medium density population (0·5 – 3 people per acre) – 95 per cent. of calls responded to in 18 minutes
Sparse density population (less than 0·5 people per acre) – 95 per cent. of calls responded to in 21 minutes.

The information is as follows:

	Performance Ayrshire and Arran		*Performance Dumfries and Galloway*	
	Medium	*Sparse*	*Medium*	*Sparse*
January 1993	91	94	95	84
February 1993	92	94	88	84
March 1993	92	93	89	90
April 1993	94	93	89	81
May 1993	93	94	95	83
June 1993	93	94	88	82
July 1993	91	91	86	85
August 1993	91	89	87	83
September 1993	91	90	87	84
October 1993	92	92	89	84
November 1993	91	94	92	84
December 1993	89	91	90	94
January 1994	90	92	90	84
February 1994	92	93	88	85
March 1994	91	94	92	86

Ravenspark Hospital

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make a statement on the reasons for the Scottish Office's refusal to give its approval to a contract agreed between Ayrshire and Arran health board and the company Burley for replacement care provision arising out of the planned closure of Ravenspark hospital;

(2) if he will make a statement indicating when Ayrshire and Arran health board now expects Ravenspark hospital to close.

Mr. Stewart: The Scottish Office has not refused to approve a contract between Ayrshire and Arran health board and Burley Health Care plc. The board has been asked to look at the future needs, size and location of services for the elderly mentally ill throughout Ayrshire, before completing a contract with Burley Health Care.

Ayrshire and Arran health board has decided that Ravenspark hospital will close early in 1995 when suitable alternative care settings have been made available for the present residents. Hospital closures require public consultation and the approval of the Secretary of State.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 17 February, *Official Report*, columns *949-50*, when he will place in the Library a copy of the research report on "Accessibility to the Scottish Office".

Mr. Lang: The analysis of the data based on the results of the research into the effectiveness of the advertising campaign on accessibility to the Scottish Office is not yet completed.

Hospital Staff

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many hospital house officers, senior house officers, registrars and senior registrars there are in Scottish hospitals.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 April 1994]:* The numbers of hospital doctors and dentists in whole time equivalent in each grade in post at 30 September 1993, the latest date for which information is available, are shown in the table:

	WTE[1]
TOTAL	3,506·9
House Officer	620·0
Senior House Officer	1,862·8
Registrar	632·7
Senior Registrar	391·4

[1] Figures are provisional.

Racial Incidents

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of reported racial incidents for each police force area in Scotland for each year since 1988.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 28 April 1994]:* The total number of reported racial incidents for each police force area in Scotland from 1988 to 1993 is as follows:

Police force	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Central	9	18	45	69	51	52
Dumfries and Galloway	—	—	—	—	—	4
Fife	—	—	3	35	30	20
Grampian	4	4	9	4	20	28
Lothian and Borders	89	91	178	213	184	223
Northern	—	—	—	—	—	1
Strathclyde	197	236	300	254	250	205
Tayside	—	27	101	103	128	193
Scotland	299	376	636	678	663	726

Speech Therapists

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female speech and language therapists are currently employed in the national health service in Scotland in each health board area.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 April 1994]:* The latest information available is shown in the table.

NHS Speech Therapists in post at 30 September 1993 (whole time equivalent)

Health board	*Qualified*		*Unqualified*	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Argyll and Clyde	—	42·1	—	1·2
Ayrshire and Arran	—	29·7	—	—
Borders	—	13·4	—	0·5
Dumfries and Galloway	—	18·3	—	0·5
Fife	0·5	46·6	—	3·0
Forth Valley	—	21·2	—	—
Grampian	—	55·1	—	1·7
Greater Glasgow	1·0	91·8	—	13·5
Highland	—	25·3	—	—
Lanarkshire	—	53·0	—	—
Lothian	1·0	69·1	—	—
Orkney	—	2·5	—	—
Shetland	—	2·0	—	—
Tayside	—	40·4	—	—
Western Isles	—	5·7	—	0·5
Scotland	2·5	516·2	—	20·9

Fraud

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many complaints of alleged fraud have been made to the serious fraud unit of the Crown Office in each year since 1986; and how many *(a)* prosecutions and *(b)* convictions have followed thereon.

Mr. Lang: The Crown Office fraud and specialist service unit is an integral part of the Crown Office and deals with all inquiries relating to fraud and related offences. A number of the more serious of these inquiries are investigated by the staff of the unit and others are referred to the procurator fiscal for attention, often with advice and assistance from the staff of the unit. Precise figures are not available to show how many complaints of fraud have been received in each year since 1986, although well in excess of 100 reports are considered annually. Of the cases considered by the staff of the unit, 56 cases have been prosecuted involving 94 persons resulting in 70 persons being convicted. An annual breakdown is provided as follows:

	Number of cases	*Number of persons accused*	*Number of persons convicted*
1986	6	14	12
1987	10	20	18
1988	7	10	6
1989	7	7	6
1990	6	11	5
1991	9	16	15
1992	3	6	3
1993	5	6	2
1994	3	4	3
Total	56	94	70

Civil Servants (Business Appointments)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many civil servants in his Department applied in each year since 1986 through the business appointments system to take up an outside appointment *(a)* as an independent consultant, *(b)* in a firm of consultants and *(c)* in other employment; how many were referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments; and how many were granted.

Mr. Lang: The information is set out in the table:

	As an independent consultant	*In a firm of consultants*	*Other employment*	*Number referred to advisory committee on business appointments*	*Number approved*
1986	1	—	5	—	6
1987	—	1	5	—	6
1988	—	1	[illegible]	—	5
1989	—	2	[illegible]	—	5
1990	—	2	7	—	9
1991	—	2	4	—	6
1992	—	1	4	1	5
1993	—	1	3	—	4
1994	—	1	2	—	3

Junior Doctors

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases there have been in the past year of junior doctors not having at least *(a)* four hours rest within a duty period of 16 hours and *(b)* eight hours rest within a duty period of 32 hours.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 April 1994]:* This information is not held centrally.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he expects to meet the target of no contracts of more than 72 hours a week for junior hospital doctors by 31 December.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 April 1994]:* The Government remain committed to this objective for junior doctors in hard-pressed posts.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many junior doctors are contracted for more than 72 hours per week; and how many have regularly worked more than 72 hours per week in the past year.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 April 1994]:* At 30 September 1993, the number of junior doctors contracted for more than 72 hours duty per week was 1,630. Information on the hours actually worked by junior doctors is not held centrally.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many junior doctors are contracted for more than 83 hours per week; and how many have regularly worked more than 83 hours per week in the past year.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 April 1994]:* At 30 September 1993, the number of junior doctors in Scotland contracted for more than 83 hours duty per week was 30. Information on the hours actually worked by junior doctors is not held centrally.

Cremations

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest available annual figure for the number of people cremated.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 April 1994]:* Data maintained by the Federation of British Cremation Authorities indicate that there were 35,558 cremations in Scotland in 1993.

European Social Fund

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland to what extent he has any responsibility for the operation of the European social fund in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend is responsible for the European social fund in areas in Scotland designatd as objective 1, 2 or 5b under the appropriate regulations. Responsibility in Great Britain for national schemes under objective 3 rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

Free School Meals

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many children currently receive free school meals; and what percentage that forms of the total number of schoolchildren.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 24 November 1993, *Official Report*, columns *73-74*, to my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson).

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 4 May 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Privatisation (Consultants)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will estimate the cost of employing consultants in connection with privatisation programmes in which his Department has been engaged since 1980.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No Department for which the Lord Chancellor is responsible has incurred any consultancy costs in connection with privatisation programmes since 1980.

HEALTH

Generic Prescribing

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the average proportion of generic prescribing undertaken by general practitioner fundholders now and before they became fundholders.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information is not available to make such an assessment. The generic prescribing rate for fundholders in 1992-93 was 49 per cent. compared with 43 per cent. for other general practitioners.

NHS Trust Chairmen

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current salary paid to each chairman of an NHS trust.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 14 February at column *987*.

Alzheimer's Disease

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to increase Government funding for research into Alzheimer's disease.

Mr. Bowis: The Medical Research Council is always willing to consider support for soundly based new scientific proposals in competition with other applications. Funding for the MRC is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Dental Services (Stoke-on-Trent)

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the availability of NHS dental care in the Stoke-on-Trent family health services authority area; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Staffordshire family health services authority, which includes Stoke-on-Trent, reports that national health service dentistry is available in the area. Patients who need help in obtaining NHS dental treatment should contact the FHSA.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those dental practices in the Stoke-on-Trent family health services authority area which in the last 12 months have withdrawn NHS dental services.

Dr. Mawhinney: No dentist in Stoke-on-Trent has given such notice to the Staffordshire family health services authority during the last 12 months.

Ambulance Services (Humberside)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health by how much Humberside Ambulance Trust is overspent on budget.

Mr. Sackville: The 1993-94 finalised accounts will be published later this year.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list purchases of ambulance vehicles by Humberside Ambulance Trust since April 1993.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for the Humberside Ambulance Service National Health Service Trust. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mrs. Margaret Cracknell, chairman of the trust, for details.

Dental Services

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will revise the patients charter so that every patient seeking dental care under the NHS has access to NHS dental treatment on a planned and emergency basis; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: A working group, including representatives of the profession, has been set up to consider a charter for primary dental services. All family health services authorities report that they can if necessary assist patients seeking their help to receive national health service dental treatment.

Junior Doctors

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many postgraduate deans have taken action against hospitals where juniors are working 83 hours a week since 1 April 1993.

Dr. Mawhinney: Postgraduate deans are core members of all our regional task forces. As such they are actively involved in developing and implementing plans to reduce junior doctors' hours.

Children Act 1989 (Annual Report)

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when was the annual report on the Children Act 1989 due to be published; when it is now likely to be published; and what are the reasons for the change of date.

Mr. Bowis: There is no set timetable for producing the Children Act report. The second report is in preparation and will be published shortly.

Medical Ethics

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the Government's response to the report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Medical Ethics.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Government's response to the report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Medical Ethics has been published today. A copy has been placed in the Library.

Privatisation (Consultants)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will estimate the cost of employing consultants in connection with privatisation programmes in which her Department and its predecessor have been engaged since 1980.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has no record of any consultants having been employed in connection with privatisation from 1980.

Cardiac Unit, Plymouth

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to make an announcement regarding the business plan for the cardiac unit in Plymouth.

Mr. Sackville: The business case for a cardiac unit at Derriford hospital, Plymouth is currently being considered by the south and west regional office of the national health service executive.

Hospital Officers and Nurses (Training)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment her Department has made of the report on the introduction of competency-based training for hospital officers and nurses, commissioned by the Home Office; and if she will ensure with her ministerial colleagues that it is published.

Mr. Bowis: This is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

National Blood Authority

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what annual salary is paid to *(a)* the chairman, *(b)* the chief executive, *(c)* the finance and administration director, *(d)* the medical director and *(e)* each of the non-executive directors of the National Blood Authority; what other remuneration and perquisites each of these received; and what is the total cost to the public funds of the National Blood Authority.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 22 April 1994]:* The information available centrally is shown in the table. Information about payments other than annual salary and about the total cost of the National Blood Authority is not yet available, as the authority came into being on 1 April 1993. In 1992-93 central funding for the National Blood Authority's predecessor body, the Central Blood Laboratories Authority, for revenue and capital expenditure totalled £6·788 million. This figure derives from the Central Blood Laboratories Authority's audited accounts which are still subject to review by the National Audit Office. The bulk of the Central Blood Laboratories Authority's funding came from sales of plasma products primarily to national health service bodies.

Current annual salary rate	£
Chairman	8,968
Chief executive[1]	[2]76,388
Finance and administration director[1]	[2]58,114
Medical director[1]	[3]51,165
Non-executive members	
Mr. L. Banks	5,000
Mr. D. Allison	5,000
Professor Van Aken	5,000

[1] The chief executive, finance and administration and medical directors are members of the NHS pension scheme.
[2] Salary of chief executive and finance and administration director includes performance related pay.
[3] The current post holder also receives an A+ distinction award at the rate of £48,605.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disability Working Allowance

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 29 November, *Official Report*, column *317-18*, if he will update the information provided on awards of disability working allowance, also indicating the respective proportions of new and repeat claims which resulted in an award of benefit.

Mr. Scott: As of 31 March 1994 there were 3,680 current awards of disability working allowance.

The total number of claims for DWA with percentages, in the five-month period November 1993 to March 1994, was:

	Number	*Percentage resulting in awards*
New claims	3,356	35·13
Repeat claims	2,302	85·88
TOTAL	5,658	—

The number of claims adjudicated upon in the last five months is 5,230.

The reasons for unsuccessful claims with numbers and percentages for each ground for disallowance in the last five months are in the table.

Reason	*Number*	*Percentage*
Capital exceeds £16,000	5	0·24
Not in remunerative work	710	34·23
Income exceeds DWA level	342	16·49
No qualifying benefit	891	42·96
Disability test	2	0·1
Other reasons	124	5·98

Child Support Agency

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of whether the Child Support Agency is adequately staffed to deal speedily and effectively with its caseload.

Mr. Burt: We are keeping all parts of the agency's operations, including staffing levels, under close review. If changes should be needed we will make them.

War Pensions

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 30 March, *Official Report*, column 788, to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), if he will publish his correspondence with the Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions.

Mr. Hague: Correspondence between members of the Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions and Ministers is in confidence. It has never been the practice to publish such correspondence.

Privatisation (Consultants)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the cost of employing consultants in connection with privatisation programmes in which his Department has been engaged since July 1988.

Mr. Scott: This Department has no privatisation programme.

Disability Living Allowance

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what analysis the Benefits Agency makes of claims for disability living allowance which are referred to disability appeals tribunals; and if he will provide a numerical breakdown of these cases.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mrs. Jane Kennedy, dated 3 May 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question, asking for an analysis of disability living allowance claims which are referred to disability appeal tribunals.

I have provided, in the attached appendix, a table of the analysis made by the Benefits Agency within this area. The table covers the period February 1992 to the end of March 1994.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Appendix: DLA claims referred to disability appeal tribunals between 1 February 1992 and 31 March 1994

	Number
Number referred	34,679
Number decided:	
Award increased	2,082
Award maintained	7,075
Award varied[1]	84
Award reduced	8
Allowed	7,320
Disallowed	1,292
Superseded increased[2]	874
Withdrawn	794
Lapsed	4
Defective	14
Total	19,547

[1] The length of award changes, or monetary value remains the same but the components change.

[2] The appeal was lodged but current decision was revised in the appellants favour without reference to the appeals tribunal.

TREASURY

Mortgage Interest Relief

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people will face larger mortgage statements at the end of this month following the Government's decision to reduce mortgage interest relief to 20 per cent.

Mr. Dorrell: There are about 10 million single people or married couples with mortgages. Not all of them will make larger interest payments straight away as a result of the restriction of mortgage interest relief to 20 per cent. This is because some mortgages are subject to annual reviews and these may take place at different times of year. Lenders may apply the new rate of relief, and make any necessary adjustments, then.

In addition, some 200,000 borrowers receiving tax relief have loans that are not in the MIRAS—mortgage interest relief at source—scheme. For them, the restriction of relief has no effect on their interest payments, but will be made through their PAYE coding or in an annual assessment.

The number of borrowers with annual review mortgages is not known: a precise answer to the question is therefore not available.

VAT (Domestic Energy)

Mr. Mills: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the application of value-added tax to the standing charge portion of central heating and electrical supply bills; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: I have received a large number of representations. I have made it clear on a number of occasions that the standing charge has always been regarded as part of the consideration for a single supply of fuel and power. If it were not, it would already have been standard rated as the services covered, when taken in isolation, have attracted VAT at the standard rate since 1 April 1973.

Valuation List

Ms Eagle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many proposals to alter the valuation list have been referred to the valuation tribunal by each district valuation officer.

Mr. Nelson: The number of proposals to alter the valuation list which have been referred to the valuation tribunal by each valuation officer was 660,384 in total as at 31 March 1994. The numbers referred by each office individually are not held centrally; however, the numbers referred in respect of each valuation office region are as follows:

Region	*Appeals transmitted*
East Anglia	71,730
East Midland	60,547
London	98,031

Region	Appeals transmitted
Northern	63,008
North Western	58,738
South Eastern	65,501
Southern	80,150
Western	68,321
West Midland	57,936
England total	623,962
Wales	36,422
Total England and Wales	660,384

Ms Eagle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many proposals to alter the valuation list have been received by each district valuation officer.

Mr. Nelson: As at 31 March 1994, a total of 945,795 proposals to alter the valuation list had been received by district valuation officers.

A breakdown by valuation office area of initial proposals received up to 30 November 1993 is available in the Members' Library.

EU Own Resources

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring forward in the current parliamentary Session a Bill to give effect to the own resources decision agreed at the Edinburgh summit.

Sir John Cope: Before a Bill to approve the new own resources decision can be introduced, a text must be adopted unanimously in the Council of Ministers. Agreement is at present being blocked by Italy. Once agreement has been reached, and before the new decision can finally be adopted by the Council and sent to member states for their approval, conciliation must take place with the European Parliament.

It is therefore not possible to know when the new own resources decision will be ready for final adoption by the Council and accordingly the Government are not in a position to say when the Bill might be introduced.

Public Service (Pay Rise)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer for which categories of public service employee provision has been made for an average pay rise of more than 1·5 per cent. in the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Government expect public sector pay to be considered in accordance with the approach which the Chancellor announced in his statement of 14 September 1993. In 1994-95 Government Departments are expected to keep their running costs, including pay bills, to their 1993-94 levels in cash terms. A similar approach applies to other public sector pay groups. Provision has been set on this basis. This is not a freeze on pay settlements and does not pre-empt annual pay determination arrangements. Pay should be set at levels necessary to recruit, retain and motivate staff within what can be afforded. All parts of the public sector should be able to make efficiency savings and other economies necessary to accommodate the costs of pay increases on this basis.

Foreign Currency Earnings

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact on foreign currency earnings from overseas visitors to the United Kingdom as a result of EC Commission proposal Com (94) 5813 to amend directive 77/388/EEC.

Sir John Cope: There are trade concerns that there could be an adverse effect on sales in the event of the adoption of the European Commission proposals for a minimum threshold of 175 ecu before non-EC visitors can claim a VAT refund. The United Kingdom has accordingly registered its opposition to this proposal and will continue to listen carefully to trade concerns.

Company Cars

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the annual value to Customs and Excise of the special provisions in respect of VAT recovery of company cars; and when the provisions were imposed and under what authority.

Sir John Cope: Taxation of the private use of business cars is mandatory under Community law. Since the inception of the tax in April 1973, the United Kingdom has achieved this through restricting tax recovery on the purchase of cars. The current legal basis for this simplified procedure is permitted under article 17(6) of the sixth directive (77/388/EEC) implemented in the United Kingdom by an Order made under section 14(10) of the VAT Act 1983. The provision is expected to contribute around an estimated £1·6 billion to the Exchequer in 1994.

Customs and Excise

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many excise verification officers are employed by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise on tasks connected with duty-paid imports to the United Kingdom from elsewhere in the European Union; and what is the cost to public funds.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* During the financial year 1993-94 Her Majesty's Customs and Excise allocated 253 staff years to single market duties. The majority of this work, for which the salaries bill was £4 million, was performed by excise verification officers. In addition, VAT staff and others assist in the course of their normal work in the control of the sale of excise goods which have not paid United Kingdom duty.

Civil Servants (Business Appointments)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many civil servants in his Departments applied in each year since 1986 through the business appointments system to take up an outside appointment *(a)* as an independent consultant, *(b)* with a firm of consultants and *(c)* in other employment; how many were referrred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments; and how many were granted.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* The following table gives information from 1987 on applications from civil servants in my Department through the business appointments system to take up outside

appointments. Information prior to that date could be obtained only at disproportionate cost as it would involve sifting through individual files. The table also shows which cases were referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments and the total number of cases granted.

	(a) Independent consultant	(b) Firm of consultants	(c) Other employment	Referred to advisory committee	Total granted
1987	0	0	4	0	4
1988	1	2	4	0	7
1989	0	6	9	1	15
1990	0	6	12	0	18
1991	1	1	5	1	7
1992	0	1	2	0	3
1993	0	0	4	1	4

Council Tax

Mr. Burden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what targets the Valuation Office Agency has set for clearing council tax valuation appeals.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* The Valuation Office Agency expects four out of five appeals to be settled by 31 December 1994 and the remainder as quickly as possible thereafter.

Edinburgh Summit

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 27 April, *Official Report*, columns *164-65*, what was the projected monetary resources ceiling at the time of the Edinburgh summit; how that has been affected in monetary terms by current projections of growth and GNP; what are the implications for each year to 1999 in terms of change in available resources; and what are the implications for moneys available for cohesion.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* The information is in the following table:

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Own resources ceiling agreed at Edinburgh (per cent. of Community GNP)	1·20	1·20	1·21	1·22	1·24	1·26	1·27
Value of Edinburgh own resources ceiling on basis of growth projections available at the time (becu—1992 prices)	65·8	67·3	69·5	71·9	74·9	78·0	80·6
Value of Edinburgh own resources ceiling on basis of latest growth projections (becu—1992 prices)	64·4	65·2	67·1	69·4	72·3	75·2	77·8
Change in estimated available resources since Edinburgh (becu—1992 prices)	−1·4	−2·1	−2·4	−2·5	−2·6	−2·8	−2·8

The own resources ceiling is a legally binding limit on the amount of own resources which can be called up by the European Community to finance payments from the budget. In setting the annual budget, the budgetary authority—the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament—must ensure that the own resources ceiling is respected, if necessary by agreeing expenditure totals which are less than those in the financial perspective agreed at Edinburgh. The policies to be affected by these reductions would be for decision at the time.

Civil Servants

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest available figure for the total number of civil servants *(a)* including and *(b)* excluding those employed by "next steps" agencies.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* On 1 October 1993 there were in total 546,339 civil servants, the lowest in the post-war period. Of these 209,936 were not working in "next steps" agencies.

Upper Limb Disorders (Civil Servants)

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the present number of civil servants taking legal action against their employer as a result of work-related upper limb disorders.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have been asked to reply. This information is not held centrally.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Cross-channel Electricity Interconnector

Mr. Spellar: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals his Department has for expanding the capacity of the cross-channel electricity interconnector.

Mr. Heseltine: None. It is for the industry to make any proposals of this kind.

Sizewell B

Mr. Spellar: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the costs in lost revenue from the delay in commissioning the Sizewell B nuclear reactor; and what are the reasons for the delay.

Mr. Heseltine: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on 22 April 1994, *Official Report*, column *708*.

Telecommunications

Mr. Spellar: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on progress in negotiations with the United States of America regarding access for British telecommunications companies to the United States market.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government strongly support the effort of United Kingdom telecoms companies to enter the United States market and work closely with them. In particular, the Government have taken up with the United States authorities specific issues, including discriminatory regulation already in force or being proposed.

The Government are continuing to press for further liberalisation and market opening in and outside Europe to provide better access for United Kingdom companies, and to benefit United Kingdom consumers through lower prices for international calls.

Private Detective Agencies

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the use of private detective agencies and security companies by his Department.

Mr. Heseltine: My Department does not use private detective agencies. Private sector security firms are contracted to provide access control to departmental premises.

Launch Aid

Mr. Davidson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) how much money has returned to the Government as partial repayment of launch aid for aircraft and engine programmes in each of the last 25 years;

(2) how much public money has been used in launch aid for specific aircraft and engine programmes in each of the last 25 years.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answers 3 May 1994]:* The information is as follows:

£ million

	Airframes (including helicopters)		*Aeroengines*	
Year	*Payments*	*Receipts*	*Payments*	*Receipts*
1969-70	0·2	1·9	0·1	1·5
1970-71	0	1·0	0·7	2·3
1971-72	0	0·4	56·6	1·5
1972-73	0	0·4	49·2	1·3
1973-74	1·6	0·4	15·7	1·3
1974-75	1·6	5·2	41·4	1·6
1975-76	2·1	0·5	3·1	2·7
1976-77	2·0	0·4	10·6	2·6
1977-78	0·5	0·3	0	14·6
1978-79	0	0·4	16·0	6·8
1979-80	0	0·4	105·1	4·0
1980-81	0	0·5	62·2	8·7
1981-82	0	0·4	92·6	8·3
1982-83	10·0	0·4	53·7	12·7
1983-84	10·7	0·4	74·3	7·9
1984-85	64·2	0·4	19·9	10·2
1985-86	81·6	0·5	22·7	15·2
1986-87	91·7	0·5	27·3	22·2
1987-88	52·6	0·4	0	28·3
1988-89	97·7	0·3	0	21·5
1989-90	133·6	10·5	0	31·9
1990-91	141·1	34·5	0	17·3
1991-92	78·7	55·7	0	27·3
1992-93	31·4	41·1	0	33·6
1993-94	0·6	29·5	0	[1]23·8

[1] Provisional figure.

Note:
All amounts are at cash prices.

Overseas Mail

Mr. Davidson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the Government's policy in respect of the criteria to be used in determining which airline should carry British mail abroad.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* Decisions about which airlines are used to carry British mail abroad are a commercial matter for the Post Office.

Steel Production

Mr. Hardy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what agreement was reached by the Council of Ministers at its recent meeting in Luxembourg in regard to excessive steel production capacity and unfair trading practices by steel producers and regional or national administrations in other EC member states.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friends the Members for Basildon (Mr. Amess) and for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) on 29 April, *Official Report,* columns *348-49.*

Local Government

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what provisions of the Children Act 1989 and the Registered Homes Act 1984, as amended, have been considered by his interdepartmental scrutiny of local government enforcement; what proposals have arisen as a result; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* The interdepartmental scrutiny team is looking at all aspects of local government enforcement as they affect business and this will be reflected in their report. This includes social services activities. The scrutiny team will complete its investigations and make recommendations to Ministers by the end of May.

I understand that the specific legislation mentioned is being considered under a separate review by the Department of Health, but that the review and scrutiny teams are in regular contact.

Radio Frequencies

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the probable level of interference with aeronautical radio navigation services of high-powered national broadcasting on the 105 to 108 MHz radio frequencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* Broadcasting services in the frequency band 87·5 to 108 MHz have the potential to cause interference to

aeronautical radio navigation services. It is the Government's responsibility, however, to ensure that any planned new radio station will not cause unacceptable interference. The assessment of potential interference is a complex task involving not only the power and frequency of a proposed new transmitter, but those of existing transmitters and, in particular, the dispositions of transmitters relative to each other, to airports and to flight paths. These assessments are made by the Radiocommunications Agency, in my Department.

It is not possible to carry out an assessment of the interference potential of radio stations in the band 105 to 108 MHz until the details of all proposed broadcasting transmitters are known. However, in preparation for the opening of that band, some hypothetical studies were made by the Radiocommunications Agency which led it to the opinion that transmitting powers as high as 40KW may be acceptable in locations and at frequencies that are favourable.

The Radio Authority is currently conducting a public consultation exercise about the possible service options in this new band of frequency spectrum, which the Government have made available for independent radio. These options range from the provision of a new national radio service to the provision of numerous low power and highly localised services. Having reached a decision, the Radio Authority will present a detailed transmitter plan for the proposed services to the Radiocommunications Agency for clearance. Until then, it is not possible to comment further, but I am confident that it will be possible to agree a plan which is fully compatible with aeronautical navigation services.

Coal Industry

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he last met representatives of trade unions within the coal industry to discuss redundancy schemes and payments after 30 April; what was the conclusion of those meetings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* Both my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy and I meet representatives of trades unions from within the coal industry from time to time to discuss a wide variety of matters affecting the industry. I understand that British Coal is currently discussing with the unions the redundancy arrangements to apply after 30 April.

Directors (Disqualification)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many adverse reports on directors have been submitted by insolvency practitioners in Scotland to the company directors disqualification unit in Edinburgh in each year since 1986.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* The numbers of unfitted conduct reports on directors, submitted by insolvency practitioners in Scotland to the company directors disqualification unit in Edinburgh since 1986, are as follows:—

	Number
1986	nil
1987	67
1988	189
1989	152
1990	173
1991	181
1992	154
1993	241

Mr. Wallace: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many disqualifications of directors of companies registered in Scotland have taken place under the Company Directors Disqualification Act in each year since 1986.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* Since 1986 the number of disqualification orders made under section 6 of the Company Directors Disqualification act 1986 against directors of companies registered in Scotland is as follows:

	Number
1986	Nil
1987	Nil
1988	3
1989	4
1990	12
1991	17
1992	54
1993	54

Gross Domestic Fixed Capital

Ms Armstrong: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the amount of manufacturing investment gross domestic fixed capital formation in each region in 1991; and if he will provide a consistent series of figures back to 1979.

Mr. Nelson: I have been asked to reply.

The latest available estimates of gross domestic fixed capital formation by region within manufacturing for 1988 to 1990 were published in the December 1992 issue of "Economic Trends", available in the House of Commons Library. Estimates for 1991 are to be published in the May 1994 issue of "Economic Trends". Information prior to 1988 is not available on a consistent time series basis.

PRIME MINISTER

Sir Peter Levene

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) of 10 March, *Official Report*, column *319*, if he will list all the relevant interests of Sir Peter Levene, and any issues so far identified where a potential conflict of interest exists.

The Prime Minister: Sir Peter Levene is chairman of Canary Wharf Ltd. and its subsidiaries, deputy chairman of Wasserstein Perella and Co. Ltd., and an alderman of the City of London. No issues which involve a conflict of interest for Sir Peter Levene have arisen under the arrangements which I set out in my answer to the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) on 10 March, column *319*.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Cox: To ask the Prime Minister when he expects the Scott inquiry report to be published; and in what form he intends to make known the Government's observations on the findings of the inquiry.

The Prime Minister: On the question of the timing of the publication of Lord Justice Scott's report, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold) on 15 March, *Official Report*, column *645*.

It is too early to say in what form the Government will make their observations on the report.

Miss Beata Brookes

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Prime Minister whether the re-appointment of Miss Beata Brookes to be chairman of the Welsh Consumer Council was referred to his public appointments unit; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* The re-appointment of Miss Brookes was referred to the public appointments unit before my views were sought. This is in line with the answer I gave on 14 May 1993, *Official Report*, column *583*.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Driving Offences

Mr. Miller: To ask the Attorney-General in what form statistics are collected by the Crown Prosecution Service relating to the prosecution of drivers for *(a)* drink driving offences, *(b)* other offences and *(c)* offences causing death.

The Attorney-General: The Crown Prosecution Service maintains no central records relating to the prosecution of drivers in respect of specific offences. Details are recorded on individual case files.

Offence-based figures are available in the "Criminal Statistics England and Wales" published by the Home Office.

Privatisation (Consultants)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Attorney-General if he will estimate the cost of employing consultants in connection with privatisation programmes in which his departments have been engaged since 1980.

The Attorney-General: None.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the total number of prisoners in custody in England and Wales on the first day of each month from April 1992 until the latest month for which figures are available;

(2) what was the total number of remand prisoners in custody in England and Wales on the first day of each month from April 1992 until the latest month for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 4 May 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Questions about *(a)* the total number of prisoners and *(b)* the number of remand prisoners in custody on the first day of each month from April 1992 until the latest month for which figures are available.

The available information for the number of prisoners in custody is for the last day of each month. It is given in the attached table for the period March 1992 to February 1994.

Prison population[1] by type of custody: England and Wales—March 1992 to February 1994

	Total remand	Sentenced	Total[2]
1992			
March	10,678	36,751	47,746
April	10,646	36,721	47,738
May	10,294	36,057	46,696
June	10,404	36,065	46,832
July	9,942	36,603	46,875
August	10,128	35,929	46,350
September	10,020	35,589	45,835
October	9,605	34,019	43,905
November	9,459	33,333	43,064
December	9,490	31,845	40,606
1993			
January	9,433	31,793	41,561
February	9,9[illegible]	32,461	42,882
March	9,996	32,661	43,195
April	9,997	32,796	43,391
May	10,181	32,805	43,585
June	10,632	33,046	44,246
July	10,572	33,653	44,830
August	11,407	33,616	45,633
September	11,445	34,139	46,211
October	11,829	34,445	46,886
November	11,895	34,585	47,153
December	10,763	33,818	45,214
1994			
January	12,109	34,089	46,902
February	12,109	35,095	47,90[illegible]

[1] Includes prisoners held in police cells.
[2] Includes non-criminal prisoners.

Prisons (Drug Abuse)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what action is being taken to seek to reduce the incidence of drug abuse at each HM prison, HM remand centre and HM detention centre in *(a)* South Yorkshire, *(b)* North Yorkshire, *(c)* West Yorkshire and *(d)* Humberside;

(2) how often cells and other parts of the building are searched for drugs by staff and sniffer dogs at each HM prison and HM remand centre and HM detention centre in *(a)* South Yorkshire, *(b)* North Yorkshire, *(c)* West Yorkshire and *(d)* Humberside.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 4 May 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about the action being taken to reduce the incidence of drug abuse at prisons in Yorkshire and Humberside and the searching of cells and other parts of prison buildings.

All prisons in Yorkshire and Humberside search cells and other areas of the prison on a daily, but random basis. Searches using dogs trained in drug detection are carried out at the more secure prisons in Yorkshire and Humberside. For example, Full Sutton uses dogs every six weeks, Leeds every three months and Hull uses them to search non living accommodation weekly. All prisons in the area will make special searches with or without dogs when security intelligence indicates need.

Security measures including the use of X-ray scanners for parcels, increased searching of visitors and prisoners and using security information to target other searches within the establishment, are aimed at preventing drugs being brought into prison.

All prisoners are warned of the dangers of drug abuse and are offered drug counselling about the dangers of drug abuse. There are also courses to help prisoners tackle their drug problem. Some establishments run self help or drug awareness groups.

In addition to these general measures, the establishments have tailored their programmes for tackling drug abuse to meet the differing needs of their prisoner population.

For example, in South Yorkshire, Moorland prison and young offenders institution screens all prisoners on admission offering those with a serious drug problem immediate treatment in the Health Care Centre. In North Yorkshire, Northallerton remand centre targets a Personal Social Education course at those in need using outside agencies to assist in counselling. Full Sutton prison has introduced a confidential telephone line.

Prisons in West Yorkshire have similar approaches. Rudgate has a trained drugs worker to help identify those with drug problems and refer them for specialist help. New Hall and Wakefield prisons offer drug rehabilitation courses through probation and local agencies.

In Humberside, Hull prison is training two dogs specifically for drug searching and female Prison Auxiliaries have been recruited for searching female visitors.

Chelmsford Prison

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home department (1) when work will be completed on sanitation at Chelmsford prison to enable slopping out to be ended; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what measures are being taken to reduce prisoner numbers at Chelmsford prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Simon Burns, dated 4 May 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Questions about Chelmsford prison.

Integral sanitation has now been installed in most of the cells at Chelmsford. The work to complete the installation in the remaining 65 cells is scheduled to be completed in September this year.

On 26 April there were 363 prisoners in Chelmsford prison. Although the prison's certified normal accommodation is 217, its operational capacity is 381. Chelmsford serves the courts in Essex and its prison population is determined by the numbers remanded or awaiting trial or sentence.

Sentenced prisoners are quickly transferred to training prisons in the region, in order to reduce pressure on places in Chelmsford. As another measure to ease this pressure, the prison's Bail Information Unit interviews remand prisoners in order to alert the courts to cases suitable for conditional bail.

Two new houseblocks are to be built and the first should be ready for occupation in 1996. These are intended to allow existing double cells to be converted for single use. The net effect of each block will be to provide 37 extra places.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average number of prisoners in Chelmsford prison in each of the last six months.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Simon Burns, dated 4 May 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the average number of prisoners in Chelmsford prison in each of the last six months.

The available information for the historical prison population is for the last day of each month. It is given in the attached table for the period October 1993 to March 1994.

Prison population in Chelmsford: October 1993 to March 1994

End of month	*Population*
1993	
October	321
November	359
December	315
1994	
January	321
February	349
March	364

Firearms

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what information he has about the origins of firearms and shotguns used in the pursuit of crime;

(2) what proportion of firearms and shotguns used by criminals in criminal activity are believed to have been licensed, purchased legally and in the possession of an authorised person.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No statistical information is available. Firearms are only rarely recovered from scenes of crime and, in cases where they are, identifying marks have, almost invariably, been erased. Tracing the firearms back to their source is therefore extremely difficult. There is, however, no evidence to suggest any widespread use of legally held firearms by criminals in crime.

Prison Population

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the certified accommodation and the actual population at each prison in England and Wales at the latest possible date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 4 May 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the certified accommodation and actual population at each prison in England and Wales.

The attached table shows the certified normal accommodation (CNA) and population in all establishments in England and Wales on 28 April 1994.

Certified normal accommodation (CNA) and population of prisons in England and Wales on 28 April 1994

Establishment	Certified normal accommodation	Population
Acklington	658	623
Albany	436	380
Aldington	127	114
Ashwell	404	385
Askham Grange	126	112
Aylesbury	241	214
Bedford	302	279
Belmarsh	841	750
Birmingham	558	761
Blakenhurst	649	608
Blantyre House	95	95
Blundeston	408	379
Brinsford	547	471
Bristol	423	450
Brixton	483	585
Brockhill	135	133
Bullingdon	635	630
Bullwood Hall	125	113
Camp Hill	378	377
Canterbury	184	233
Cardiff	334	411
Castington	300	285
Channings Wood	594	551
Chelmsford	230	363
Coldingley	292	276
Cookham Wood	120	117
Dartmoor	538	508
Deerbolt	450	395
Dorchester	138	192
Dover	316	219
Downview	287	270
Drake Hall	255	214
Durham	399	574
East Sutton Park	81	86
Elmley	627	592
Erlestoke	250	229
Everthorpe	228	227
Exeter	274	381
Featherstone	599	570
Feltham	842	758
Finnamore Wood	106	52
Ford	536	449
Frankland	447	419
Full Sutton	604	550
Garth	512	496
Gartree	277	273
Glen Parva	767	773
Gloucester	211	252
Grendon	190	178
Guys Marsh	240	177
Hollesley Bay	365	315
Haslar	145	141
Hatfield	180	173
Haverigg	405	352
Hewell Grange	156	165
High Down	549	520
Highpoint	679	606
Hindley	280	303
Holloway	517	460
Holme House	649	633
Hull	328	426
Huntercombe	226	207
Kingston	154	135
Kirkham	644	611
Kirklevington	74	72
L'caster Farms	364	358
Lancaster	260	255
Latchmere House	145	137
Leeds	814	1,155
Leicester	192	331
Lewes	282	346
Leyhill	410	390
Lincoln	444	624
Lindholme	567	514
Littlehey	593	554
Liverpool	931	1,253
Long Lartin	362	349
Low Newton	198	248
Maidstone	485	471
Manchester	470	505
Moorland	635	639
Morton Hall	168	167
New Hall	169	170
North Sea Camp	201	199
Northallerton	150	151
Norwich	457	467
Nottingham	222	211
Onley	516	464
Oxford	109	10
Parkhurst	286	240
Pentonville	559	700
Portland	420	332
Preston	382	496
Pucklechurch	56	60
Ranby	347	350
Reading	182	158
Risley	751	705
Rochester	294	232
Rudgate	287	267
Send	113	110
Shepton Mallet	158	175
Shrewsbury	168	288
Spring Hill	210	209
Stafford	532	533
Standford Hill	384	372
Stocken	396	392
Stoke Heath	300	274
Styal	180	203
Sudbury	413	330
Sudbury Foston	96	92
Swaleside	512	500
Swansea	155	212
Swinfen Hall	182	181
Thorn Cross	209	180
The Mount	484	474
The Verne	552	520
The Wolds	339	364
Thorp Arch	166	166
USK	241	231
W'wood Scrubs	714	894
Wakefield	718	684
Wandsworth	821	825
Wayland	580	553
Wellingborough	314	312
Werrington	110	107
Wetherby	196	150
Whatton	216	210
Whitemoor	534	472
Winchester	368	386
Woodhill	566	511
Wymott	432	284
TOTAL	48,218	48,350

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are his latest projections of prison population growth for the next 12 months.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 4 May 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to write to you in reply to your recent Question about the latest projections of prison population growth for the next twelve months.

The latest population projection is described in paragraph 2·5 and Annex 1 of the HM Prison Service Corporate Plan 1994-97, a copy of which is enclosed. The projection is for an average population of 48,800 for 1994-95 and a population of 50,800 by March 1995. The projection is subject to considerable uncertainty as the population reflects what happens elsewhere in the Criminal Justice System.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average certified normal accommodation and the average prisoner population, at each prison since 1980.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 4 May 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking what was the average certified normal accommodation and the average prisoner population, at each prison since 1980.

The information you have requested is published annually in the "Report on the work of the Prison Department" for years 1980-84 and 1985-86 to 1991-92 and in the "Prison Service Annual Report and Accounts" (Volume 2, Cm. 2385) for 1992-93. Copies of these publications are available in the House of Commons library.

Security

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the use of private detective agencies and security companies by his Department.

Mr. Howard: I know of no instance where a private detective agency has been employed by my Department. I refer the hon. Member to the reply to the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) on Tuesday 26 April, column 98, for information in respect of security companies employed by my Department.

Prison Hostages

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many hostage incidents in prisons in each of the last five years have involved women staff.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 4 May 1994:

The Home Secretary has sked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of hostage incidents in prisons in each of the last five years involving women staff.

There was one such incident in 1989 and two in 1991.

Civil Servants (Career Breaks)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many civil servants in his Department, including those working for agencies, have taken career breaks in each of the past five years; and how many of those civil servants were prison officers.

Mr. Howard: The number of civil servants in the Home Office, excluding the Prison Service, who have taken a career break in each year since 1989 is set out in the table. This information was taken from the Home Office personnel information system on 29 April 1994.

Number of civil servants who have taken a career break

	Number
1989	6
1990	22
1991	50
1992	39
1993	25
[1]1994	5

[1] To date.

I have asked the Director General of the Prison Service to write to the hon. Member about career breaks in the Prison Service.

Prison Building

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his future prison building plans.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 4 May 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the new prison building programme.

A further six new prisons are planned under the prison building programme. On 2 September 1993 the Home Secretary announced that the design, construction, management and potential financing of future new prisons would be contracted out to the private sector. It is intended that all six of the planned new prisons will be procured in this way.

Sites at Fazakerley in Merseyside and at Bridgend in South Wales have been identified for the first two prisons. The proposals to build a prison on the Fazakerley site was the subject of a non-statutory public local inquiry held between 26 October and 10 November 1993 and we are awaiting the outcome. We have outline planning clearance to build a prison on the site at Bridgend. If we obtain planning clearance for a new prison on the Fazakerley site we expect construction work on the site and on the Bridgend site to begin in 1995-96 and the two prisons to open as early as possible in 1997-98.

Work is currently in progress to identify suitable sites for the other four prisons and it is too early to indicate a timetable for their construction and opening.

Notifiable Offences

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answers to the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) of 26 April, *Official Report*, columns *98-102*, regarding notifiable offences in 1993, if he will show *(a)* the total offences, *(b)* burglary, *(c)* theft, *(d)* criminal damage,

(e) theft from a vehicle and *(f)* theft of a vehicle in each police authority area (i) per uniformed officer and (ii) per thousand of population.

Mr. Maclean: The available information is given in the tables.

Notifiable offences recorded by the police—1993
England and Wales

Police force area	*Offences per police officer*	*Offences per 1,000 population*
Avon and Somerset	57	122
Bedfordshire	50	110
Cambridgeshire	51	97
Cheshire	42	83
Cleveland	54	140
Cumbria	36	89
Derbyshire	50	97
Devon and Cornwall	41	80
Dorset	39	78
Durham	47	111
Essex	38	77
Gloucestershire	52	113
Greater Manchester	51	142
Hampshire	44	86
Hertfordshire	33	67
Humberside	69	160
Kent	50	105
Lancashire	42	95
Leicestershire	53	111
Lincolnshire	43	88
Merseyside	30	98
Metropolitan Police District[1]	32	124
Norfolk	44	84
Northamptonshire	50	101
Northumbria	59	148
North Yorkshire	43	80
Nottinghamshire	67	155
South Yorkshire	51	121
Staffordshire	44	94
Suffolk	35	67
Surrey	31	68
Sussex	37	78
Thames Valley	51	101
Warwickshire	44	93
West Mercia	40	75
West Midlands	47	125
West Yorkshire	60	144
Wiltshire	32	72
Dyfed-Powys	25	53
Gwent	39	89
North Wales	35	74
South Wales	52	125
Total	43	108

[1] Including City of London.

Notifiable offences of burglary recorded by the police—1993
England and Wales

Police force area	*Offences per police officer*	*Offences per 1,000 population*
Avon and Somerset	13	28
Bedfordshire	13	29
Cambridgeshire	12	22
Cheshire	12	23
Cleveland	13	33
Cumbria	9	22
Derbyshire	14	27
Devon and Cornwall	11	21
Dorset	7	14
Durham	10	23
Essex	9	18
Gloucestershire	15	32
Greater Manchester	14	38
Hampshire	10	19
Hertfordshire	8	16
Humberside	23	54
Kent	9	20
Lancashire	9	21
Leicestershire	13	28
Lincolnshire	11	22
Merseyside	7	23
Metropolitan Police District[1]	6	24
Norfolk	12	24
Northamptonshire	13	27
Northumbria	17	44
North Yorkshire	12	23
Nottinghamshire	17	39
South Yorkshire	17	40
Staffordshire	13	29
Suffolk	7	14
Surrey	8	17
Sussex	9	19
Thames Valley	10	20
Warwickshire	12	26
West Mercia	9	16
West Midlands	14	38
West Yorkshire	19	45
Wiltshire	7	16
Dyfed-Powys	5	10
Gwent	7	16
North Wales	9	18
South Wales	12	29
Total	11	27

[1] Including City of London.

Notifiable offences of theft recorded by the police—1993
England and Wales

Police force area	*Offences per police officer*	*Offences per 1,000 population*
Avon and Somerset	32	69
Bedfordshire	26	57
Cambridgeshire	29	56
Cheshire	20	40
Cleveland	29	74
Cumbria	18	44
Derbyshire	23	45
Devon and Cornwall	21	41
Dorset	22	45
Durham	25	58
Essex	20	41
Gloucestershire	29	61
Greater Manchester	25	68
Hampshire	23	45
Hertfordshire	17	35
Humberside	31	72
Kent	28	59
Lancashire	22	50
Leicestershire	27	57
Lincolnshire	22	44
Merseyside	14	47
Metropolitan Police District[1]	16	61
Norfolk	23	44
Northamptonshire	24	49
Northumbria	24	61
North Yorkshire	22	42
Nottinghamshire	33	76
South Yorkshire	23	55
Staffordshire	20	42
Suffolk	18	35
Surrey	16	36
Sussex	19	40
Thames Valley	29	57
Warwickshire	22	46
West Mercia	22	42
West Midlands	21	57
West Yorkshire	28	68
Wiltshire	16	37
Dyfed-Powys	12	25

Police force area	Offences per police officer	Offences per 1,000 population
Gwent	21	48
North Wales	17	36
South Wales	24	59
Total	22	54

[1] Including City of London.

Notifiable offences of criminal damage recorded by the police—1993
England and Wales

Police force area	Offences per police officer	Offences per 1,000 population
Avon and Somerset	7	15
Bedfordshire	6	14
Cambridgeshire	6	11
Cheshire	6	12
Cleveland	10	24
Cumbria	6	16
Derbyshire	9	17
Devon and Cornwall	5	10
Dorset	5	9
Durham	8	19
Essex	6	12
Gloucestershire	5	10
Greater Manchester	9	24
Hampshire	7	13
Hertfordshire	5	11
Humberside	10	22
Kent	8	18
Lancashire	8	18
Leicestershire	8	16
Lincolnshire	7	14
Merseyside	5	16
Metropolitan Police District[1]	6	24
Norfolk	5	10
Northamptonshire	8	16
Northumbria	14	35
North Yorkshire	5	10
Nottinghamshire	11	25
South Yorkshire	8	18
Staffordshire	7	14
Suffolk	5	10
Surrey	4	9
Sussex	6	13
Thames Valley	8	16
Warwickshire	6	13
West Mercia	6	11
West Midlands	7	19
West Yorkshire	9	21
Wiltshire	5	10
Dyfed-Powys	5	11
Gwent	7	15
North Wales	6	12
South Wales	12	28
Total	7	18

[1] Including City of London.

Notifiable offences of theft from a vehicle recorded by the police—1993
England and Wales

Police force area	Offences per police officer	Offences per 1,000 population
Avon and Somerset	12	26
Bedfordshire	10	21
Cambridgeshire	9	17
Cheshire	7	14
Cleveland	6	16
Cumbria	7	17
Derbyshire	9	18
Devon and Cornwall	8	16
Dorset	7	13
Durham	7	15
Essex	7	13
Gloucestershire	13	27
Greater Manchester	8	21
Hampshire	9	17
Hertfordshire	7	15
Humberside	10	23
Kent	8	18
Lancashire	7	17
Leicestershire	9	19
Lincolnshire	5	11
Merseyside	4	12
Metropolitan Police District[1]	5	21
Norfolk	9	17
Northamptonshire	8	17
Northumbria	7	17
North Yorkshire	7	13
Nottinghamshire	9	22
South Yorkshire	8	19
Staffordshire	8	16
Suffolk	5	9
Surrey	6	13
Sussex	7	14
Thames Valley	11	22
Warwickshire	9	18
West Mercia	7	13
West Midlands	8	21
West Yorkshire	10	23
Wiltshire	5	12
Dyfed-Powys	3	6
Gwent	7	15
North Wales	6	13
South Wales	9	21
Total	7	18

[1] Including City of London.

Notifiable offences of theft of a vehicle recorded by the police—1993
England and Wales

Police force area	Offences per police officer	Offences per 1,000 population
Avon and Somerset	8	18
Bedfordshire	7	16
Cambridgeshire	5	10
Cheshire	5	9
Cleveland	9	24
Cumbria	3	6
Derbyshire	5	10
Devon and Cornwall	3	5
Dorset	3	6
Durham	7	15
Essex	4	7
Gloucestershire	4	9
Greater Manchester	8	22
Hampshire	3	6
Hertfordshire	4	7
Humberside	7	15
Kent	6	12
Lancashire	4	9
Leicestershire	6	13
Lincolnshire	3	6
Merseyside	3	11
Metropolitan Police District[1]	3	10
Norfolk	3	6
Northamptonshire	6	13
Northumbria	8	20
North Yorkshire	4	7
Nottinghamshire	7	16
South Yorkshire	7	17
Staffordshire	5	10
Suffolk	2	4
Surrey	3	6
Sussex	3	5
Thames Valley	6	12
Warwickshire	5	10
West Mercia	4	8

Police force area	Offences per police officer	Offences per 1,000 population
West Midlands	6	15
West Yorkshire	8	18
Wiltshire	2	5
Dyfed-Powys	1	3
Gwent	4	8
North Wales	2	5
South Wales	7	17
Total	5	12

[1] Including City of London.

Somali Refugees

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to assist Somalis with refugee status or with permission for an extended stay in the United Kingdom who wish to return to help in the redevelopment of their country without losing the right to return if the situation in Somalia deteriorates.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Any refugee or person with exceptional leave to remain in the United Kingdom is free to seek to re-establish themselves in their country of origin, but this must raise the question whether they continue to have a well-founded fear of persecution or a humanitarian case for exceptional leave.

Hospital Officers and Nurses (Training)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his Department received a copy of the report commissioned on the introduction of competency-based training for hospital officers and nurses; and when he intends to publish it.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. David Blunkett, dated 4 May 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question as to when his Department received a copy of the report commissioned on the introduction of competency based training for hospital officers and nurses; and when he intends to publish it.

The report commissioned on the introduction of competency based training was received on the 28 February 1992. The report was judged to meet neither quality standards nor the tender specification. The report was therefore rejected by the Head of Nursing Services and not published. A further report was commissioned from an alternative source and received on 20 November 1992. As a direct result of this second report a policy of providing National Vocational Qualifications in care at levels 2 and 3 has been introduced for all hospital officers now called health care officers.

Pregnant Prisoners

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women prisoners gave birth during imprisonment in England and Wales in each of the last 10 years; in which prisons the women were held before the birth; in which prisons the women were held after the birth; and where the births took place.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 4 May 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of women who have given birth while serving a prison sentence in each of the last ten years; in which prisons the women were held before the birth; in which prisons the women were held after the birth; and where the births took place.

The annual reports on the work of the Prison Service until 1991-92 record the number of women temporarily removed to outside hospital for delivery and returning to establishments afterwards. Figures are now published in the annual report of the Director of Health Care for prisoners. The figures are:

	Numbers
1983	70
[1]1984-85	70
1985-86	71
1986-87	62
1987-88	75
1988-89	63
1989-90	74
1990-91	65
1991-92	56
1992-93	29

[1] 15 month period.

In addition there were six deliveries within Prison Service establishments:

	Numbers
1983	1
1984-85	1
1985-86	1
1987-88	1
1988-89	2

Pregnant women who wish to keep their babies with them in prison are held in Holloway, Styal or Askham Grange. It is not possible to say which prisons women were held in after the birth as such detailed records are not kept. If the baby remained with the mother on a prison mother and baby unit they would have been in Holloway, Askham Grange or Styal prisons. If the mother made alternative arrangements for the care of her baby then it is possible she may have been held in any of the women's establishments.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Sunday Trading (Cinemas)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received about the effect the Sunday Trading Bill will have on the operation of cinemas on Sunday; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I have received no such representations.

Orchestras

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what information he has about the financial position of the Hallé orchestra, the Royal

Liverpool philharmonic, the Bournemouth symphony orchestra and the City of Birmingham symphony orchestra.

Mr. Brooke: I am aware of concerns that the orchestras to which my hon. Friend refers are currently facing varying degrees of financial difficulty. However, I have no locus in matters relating to the funding of individual arts organisations. The orchestras in question are clients of the Arts Council of England, which closely monitors their financial as well as artistic and management performance.

Community Radio

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what information he has concerning the number of broadcasting franchises which have to date been allocated to community radio broadcasters, who are the broadcasters concerned; and on what date they took over the franchise in question.

Mr. Brooke: Government policy is that the responsibility for licensing independent radio services lies with the Radio Authority, which will have the detailed answers my hon. Friend seeks.

Some general information on independent radio licenses may be found in the Authority's annual report, a copy of which is in the Library.

Sleeping Drugs

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what restrictions are in place on advertising drugs available without prescription which are designed to aid sleep; what checks are carried out to ensure that addictive or potentially harmful drugs are not advertised for mass consumption; what health warnings should be given in such advertisements; in what ways regulations or guidelines on the advertisement of such drugs have been amended or relaxed within the past five years; what plans he has to introduce new legislation, statutory orders or guidelines to regulate the promotion of aids to sleep which are available without prescription; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I refer the hon. Member to the reply to his similar question given on 27 April, column *203*, by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville). The Independent Television Commission and the Radio Authority issue codes of advertising standards and practice, which include provisions on medicines and treatments. These codes are reviewed from time to time.

ENVIRONMENT

Retirement Housing

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether the current remit of the housing association tenants ombudsman will allow the extension of his work to incorporate those members of the Association of Retirement Housing Managers which are not registered housing associations; what is his policy on such an extension; and what is the estimated additional cost;

(2) what plans he has to support attempts by the Association of Retirement Housing Managers to bring all their members under the jurisdiction of the housing association tenants ombudsman.

Sir George Young: The housing association tenants ombudsman service was established by the Housing Corporation last autumn to handle complaints from tenants and leaseholders of properties owned or managed by housing associations registered with the Corporation. This is a very early stage at which to consider posible extensions of its remit, particularly outside the registered housing association sector. I shall, however, seek the views of the Housing Corporation about the feasibility of the proposal made by the Association of Retirement Housing Managers.

Tenants' Cash Incentive Scheme

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the sums given to each London borough for the year 1994-95 for the tenants' cash incentive scheme; and how each sum is arrived at.

Sir George Young: The table shows the additional Government resources allocated to London borough councils for cash incentive schemes in 1994-95.

In assessing bids and allocating the £16·2 million my right hon. Friend took account of a number of factors, including: how the housing needs of the area would benefit from a cash incentive scheme; the general needs index for the authority; the amount the authority proposed to allocate to the scheme from its own resources, and whether it had the means to do so; whether the authority had previously run a successful scheme; and the value of encouraging a local authority to run a scheme for the first time.

Local Authority	*Allocation (£)*
Barnet	500,000
Bexley	110,000
Brent	520,000
Camden	1,500,000
Corporation of London	110,000
Croydon	1,420,000
Ealing	350,000
Enfield	700,000
Greenwich	460,000
Hackney	690,000
Hammersmith and Fulham	450,000
Haringey	820,000
Harrow	450,000
Havering	100,000
Hillingdon	810,000
Hounslow	380,000
Islington	610,000
Kensington and Chelsea	180,000
Kingston upon Thames	400,000
Lambeth	540,000
Lewisham	180,000
Merton	270,000
Newham	630,000
Redbridge	450,000
Richmond upon Thames	500,000
Southwark	150,000
Sutton	210,000
Tower Hamlets	310,000
Waltham Forest	810,000
Wandsworth	750,000
Westminster	840,000
Totals	16,200,000

Ofwat

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidelines have been issued by his Department to Ofwat with regard to its scrutiny of future

price limits for water companies; what responsibility they have to take into account the views of the consumer; and by what means.

Mr. Atkins: The Director General of Water Services, Mr. Byatt, has responsibility for setting water price limits. It is not for the Secretary of State to guide him. However, in preparation for his current periodic review of price limits, the Director General sought the perspective of the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales on the environmental and safety obligations which water companies will have to meet in the period 1995 to 2005. The Secretaries of State published their perspective, "Water Charges: The Quality Framework", in October 1993. The Director General has a duty to protect the interests of customers under section 2 of the Water Industry Act 1991. To assist him in this task, Ofwat has established 10 regional customer service committees and a National Customer Council.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will carry out an investigation into the amount being spent by urban development corporations on private sector consultants.

Mr. Baldry: Urban development corporations make use of architectural, engineering, property, legal and other specialist consultancy to provide the necessary expertise in managing major regeneration projects. It provides better value for money to the Exchequer for corporations to make use of private practice in this way than to employ such staff with the appropriate technical expertise in-house. Consultants are appointed by competitive tendering and in accordance with strict procedures which are open to inspection by independent auditors, appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Civil Servants (Business Appointments)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many civil servants in his Department applied in each year since 1986 through the business appointments system to take up an outside appointment *(a)* as an independent consultant, *(b)* with a firm of consultants and *(c)* in other employment; how many were referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments; and how many were granted.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* The information is given in the following table, which includes applications by staff of the Property Services Agency:

	Independent consultants	*Firm of consultants*	*Other employment*	*Referred to advisory committee*	*Granted*
1986	7	4	40	2	All
1987	7	3	29	0	All
1988	8	3	44	0	All
1989	10	12	37	0	All
1990	11 (12)	4	27 (29)	1 (3)	All
1991	9	3	16 (29)	1 (3)	All
1992	9 (13)	4	39 (43)	2 (6)	All
1993	6 (10)	10	23 (34)	2 (5)	All
1994	4 (7)	0	13 (20)	2 (3)	All

Note: The figures in brackets are the number of applications received; all other figures refer to the number of individuals who applied.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment at what date the guidance in the revised planning policy guidance note 13 came into effect; and what influences it is expected to have on planning inspectors sitting on appeals at that time.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* The revision of planning policy guidance note 13 was published on 15 March 1994. It is capable of being a material consideration in any planning decision taken after that date—whether by a local planning authority, the Secretary of State or a planning inspector appointed to take a decision on his behalf.

Water Charges

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the effects of increases in water charges on old-age pensioners; and what plans he has for specific assistance.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* The Director General of Water Services has a duty to protect the interests of customers and ensure no undue preference or discrimination in the fixing of charges. In performing this duty he is required to take into account, in particular, the interests of those who are disabled or of pensionable age. The Director General is currently undertaking a periodic review of charge limits for the 10 years from 1 April 1995 and will be announcing the results of his review in July.

Both the Government and the Director General are aware of the impact of rising water charges on all customers and are very keen to ensure that future charges are no higher than necessary. Specific assistance to those in need is a matter for the Secretary of State for Social Security.

River Pollution

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many miles of rivers and streams in England and Wales are polluted or are at risk of pollution from former mine workings; and what action he is taking in each region to ensure that such pollution is prevented following the passage of the Coal Industry Bill.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* In its report "Abandoned Mines and the Water Environment" published in March 1994, the National Rivers Authority estimated that some 200 km of waters in England an Wales are affected by abandoned coal mines. My noble Friend the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry

addressed the issue in another place on 26 April. He noted that the Government are reviewing the framework of pollution legislation relating to abandoned mines. Pending the outcome of that review he made clear that the Government would expect the Coal Authority, as owner of all abandoned coal mines in Great Britain, to go beyond the minimum standards of environmental responsibility which are set by its present legal duties in these areas and to seek the best environmental result which can be secured from the use of the resources available to it for these purposes. The Coal Authority will have a specific budget for this, which will enable it to carry forward in full the role and activities of British Coal in this area.

European Regional Funding

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what are the criteria for bids for a share of the money allocated to East Anglia under objective 5b funding; what qualifying schemes he has been advised upon; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement clarifying how £46 million for East Anglia is to be allocated from the funds available under objective 5b funding; what is now the timetable for bids; and when he expects fund allocations to be made.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* The Government presented six plans to the European Commission on 26 April for the development of those rural areas of England which are eligible to receive EC structural funds under objective 5b. One such eligible area covers parts of East Anglia. The plans describe the strategies and priorities which will be pursued with the funds in these areas for the period 1994-99.

The plan for the East Anglia objective 5b area identifies the types of activities for which assistance from structural funds will be sought. These include support for the development of businesses, agricultural and fishery diversification, the development of human resources, development of tourism and cultural activities and for research and development.

Under the structural funds regulations, the European Commission is required to respond to the plan within six months of receipt. It is not possible to draw upon the £46 million allocated to the region to fund projects until the Commission has reached a decision on the East Anglia plan. However, I hope bids can be invited before the autumn. The Government office for the eastern region is continuing to work closely with other local partners, such as local authorities and training and enterprise councils, on measures to implement the plan. In due course, a monitoring committee will be established to determine the detailed criteria for selecting projects.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy in regard to evaluating independent expert studies of the long-term safety of the storage of high-level radioactive waste liquor in the Sellafield storage tanks.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave him on 8 March, *Official Report*, column *203*.

Council Tax

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the press statements, parliamentary answers and other official documents in which the average household council tax has been used as a measure since April 1992.

Mr. Curry *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* The average household council tax was published in "Local Government Financial Statistics No. 4" 1990-91 to 1993-94 and in two departmental press notices, the first dated 31 March 1993, the second 31 March 1994. In each instance, a corresponding headline council tax figure for band C, two adults was also shown. The average household council tax has also been given in answer to four parliamentary questions:

On 24 February 1993 to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) *Official Report*, columns *872-74*;

On 28 April 1993 to the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) *Official Report*, column *941* and the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) *Official Report*, column *422*;

On 7 February 1994 to my noble Friend Lord Braine of Wheatley, *Official Report*, column *118*.

The Government believe that using the band C, two adults figure is the best way to compare council with council. But the average figure can be useful in comparing the council tax with the community charge, and in looking at year-on-year changes.

WALES

Water Services

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what correspondence he has had during 1994 with Dwr Cymru plc concerning water and sewage services to householders in Wales for 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend and his Department are in regular contact with Dwr Cymru on matters of common interest. The Director General of Water Services has responsibility for protecting the interests of customers for water and sewerage services in England and Wales.

Junior Doctors (Working Hours)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many junior hospital doctors in Wales are currently contracted for more than 72 hours per week; and what percentage of the total number of junior doctors in Wales this represents.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The latest returns for September 1993 showed that a total of 786 junior doctors were contracted to work for more than 72 hours per week, which represents 47 per cent. of the total number in Wales, while none was contracted to work more than an average of 83 hours per week, as required under the Government's programme to reduce the hours of junior hospital doctors. The next stage is to reduce contracted hours to 72 hours on average in hard-pressed specialties by 31 December 1994.

Wind Energy

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received on the content of annexe 1 to planning policy guidance note 22 referring to the development of wind energy plants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Since the publication of planning policy guidance note No. 22, my right hon. Friend has received two representations about the annexe on wind energy.

Local Structure Plans

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing on how many occasions each district council in Wales has granted planning permission *(a)* in departure from its structure plan and *(b)* against the advice of its chief planning officer in each year since 1990.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally.

In the Government response to the Welsh Affairs Committee's report on rural housing, it was accepted that it would be prudent to survey the performance of local planning authorities in the handling of departure cases in view of the recent changes in planning legislation. Consideration is currently being given to how best to collect this information.

Suicides

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 25 March, *Official Report,* column *454,* if he will publish for each district council in Wales, and for Wales as a whole, for the latest available year *(a)* the total number of suicides, *(b)* the number of suicides by farmers and *(c)* the figures in *(b)* as a percentage of *(a);* and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The information requested is for 1992 and is shown in the following table:

Residents of:	*(a) Total suicides and undetermined deaths*	*(b) Suicides and undetermined deaths of farmers*[1]	*(c) Farmers*[1] *suicides as a percentage of total suicides*
Alyn and Deeside	9	—	—
Colwyn	10	1	10
Delyn	5	—	—
Glyndwr	6	1	16·7
Rhuddlan	6	—	—
Wrexham Maelor	19	—	—
Carmarthen	9	—	—
Ceredigion	6	—	—
Dinefwr	9	1	11·1
Llanelli	13	—	—
Preseli Pembrokeshire	7	—	—
South Pembrokeshire	5	—	—
Blaenau Gwent	10	—	—
Islwyn	2	—	—
Monmouth	7	—	—
Newport	16	—	—
Torfaen	10	—	—
Aberconwy	10	—	—
Arfon	13	—	—
Dwyfor	3	—	—
Meirionnydd	5	—	—
Ynys Mon-Isle of Anglesey	12	—	—
Cynon Valley	3	—	—
Merthyr Tydfil	7	—	—
Ogwr	18	—	—
Rhondda	10	—	—
Rhymney Valley	14	—	—
Taff-Ely	13	—	—
Brecknock	4	—	—
Montgomeryshire	6	1	16·7
Radnor	6	1	16·7
Cardiff	38	—	—
Vale of Glamorgan	11	—	—
Lliw Valley	9	—	—
Neath	9	—	—
Port Talbot	5	—	—
Swansea	29	1	3·4
Wales	374	6	1·6

[1] Farmers, horticulturalists and farm managers.
Source: OPCS.

Community Care

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to obtain budgeted revenue information on community care for each local authority area in Wales since introduction of the programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is already collected.

Environmental Agency

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has for local government representation on the proposed Environment Agency serving Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Government propose that the Environment Agency should be established as an England and Wales organisation. The precise regional, and supporting committee, structure has yet to be determined; but the interests of local government in Wales will be taken fully into account when appointments come to be made.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to ensure local delivery of service by the proposed Environment Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The detailed arrangements for service provision at the local level will be a matter for the Environment Agency itself to determine. However, Ministers will expect it to plan its operations so as to develop a close and responsive relationship with those whom it will regulate, the public and local communities.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to provide additional funding to local authorities to assist them to carry out surveys required by the Environment Agency by 1 April 1995.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Some information is needed from local authorities in Wales in connection with the planned transfer of the waste regulation function to the Environment Agency. However, the Welsh Office, and the

Department of the Environment in England, intend to keep such requests to the absolute minimum; and no additional financial provision for local authorities is considered necessary.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to locate a regional headquarters of the proposed Environment Agency in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The precise regional structure of the Environment Agency will be a matter for its board to determine. However, Welsh Office Ministers regard it as of importance that it should have a strong regional presence in Wales.

Milk Marketing

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the objections he has received with respect to the revised scheme of reorganisation in milk marketing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I have received five responses to the consultation on the amended reorganisation scheme submitted by the Milk Marketing Board. They expressed support for the scheme in general, but were concerned about some points of detail.

Privatisation (Consultants)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the cost of employing consultants in connection with privatisation programmes in which his Department has been engaged since 1980.

Mr. Redwood: Since 1980 the Welsh Office has not incurred any expenditure on consultants in connection with privatisation programmes. The Department of Environment and the Department of Trade and Industry respectively took responsibility for the privatisation of Welsh Water and South Wales Electricity in 1989.

Miss Beata Brookes

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the public appointments of Miss Beata Brookes; what pay and time is allocated to each appointment; what is the term of office for that appointment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* The information is as follows:

Welsh Consumer Council—Chair
Remuneration: £4,730 per annum
Time Commitment: 8 days per month
National Consumer Council—Member
Remuneration: £4,730 per annum
Time Commitment: 12-15 days per annum

Both appointments run from 1 June 1991 to 30 April 1997; these appointments are made by the President of the Board of Trade.

EC Economic and Social Committee—Member
Remuneration: Nil
Time Commitment: Approximately 100 days per annum

This appointment is made by the EC Council of Ministers; the appointment runs from 19 November 1993 to 31 August 1994.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received in relation to Miss Beata Brookes' appointment as chairperson of the Welsh Consumer Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* I have received a number of letters concerning the reappointment of the chair of the Welsh Consumer Council, all of which supported Miss Brookes' reappointment.

I am consulted about this appointment, which is made by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Canine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 26 April, *Official Report*, column 92, what reports she has received of unconfirmed cases of spongiform encephalopathies in canines.

Mr. Soames: Since November 1986 41 brains from canines in Great Britain with signs of neurological disease have been submitted to the Ministry. None of these has been identified as being affected by a spongiform encephalopathy on laboratory examination.

We are also aware of on-going investigations into a single, unconfirmed case overseas. However, I am not in a position to provide further details, as the information was passed on in confidence.

Fisheries

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list for each member country of the EC the number of fishing vessels, the total quota of fish by species of each country, the fishing capacity of each country as a percentage of their quota, the number of fisheries inspected and the number of fishing protection vessels and aircraft employed.

Mr. Jack: As regards the number of fishing vessels, I refer the hon. Member to the multi-annual guidance programme of each member state as set out in Commission decisions 92/588/EEC to 92/598/EEC, as amended and, as regards quotas, to regulation 3676/93. These documents are in the Library of the House. It would be misleading to compare total capacity and total quota, but the multi-annual guidance programmes do give a broad indication of the reductions needed to bring national fleets into better balance with the stocks they fish.

The most recent information available about fisheries inspected and the number of fishing protection vessels and aircraft employed by each member state is in the Commission report on monitoring implementation of the common fisheries policy, published in 1992. This document, which is also in the Library of the House, contains information about inspections carried out during 1990 and about member states' enforcement resources. As from 1995, the Commission will be publishing an annual report on the enforcement activities of member states under the provisions of the new fisheries control regulation, Council regulation 2847/93, which came into operation on 1 January this year.

Animal Slaughter (Costs)

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements she will be making to reduce the costs on the meat slaughtering industry; and

what consideration she has given to *(a)* withdrawing the burden of veterinary supervision or *(b)* directly reimbursing veterinary costs.

Mr. Soames: The Government's policy is that the cost of the meat inspection service should be recovered from the industry. We have taken a number of steps to minimise costs, including in particular the introduction in mid-1993 of an upper limit on local authority charges. We have developed in consultation with the industry a hygiene assessment system, the results of which will help local authorities to ensure that supervision effort is targeted at the plants which present the greatest risk. We have no plans to withdraw the requirement for veterinary supervision, which is a fundamental element of the European single market legislation.

The new meat hygiene service, due to be launched in April 1995 to take over responsibility for meat hygiene enforcement, will be required to meet demanding financial and management targets to ensure that it delivers a cost-effective service.

Fishing (Conservation)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on how many occasions since the decision in December 1993 to suspend the operation of the Sea Fisheries (Conservation) Act 1992 she or the Minister of State has met representatives of the fishing industry to discuss alternative conservation strategies; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: I have had various contacts with the industry since December 1993. Ministry and Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland officials met the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations and representatives of the Northern Ireland Industry on 8 March to examine their technical conservation proposals in detail, and there was a meeting with the Commission services on 5 April.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements are in place for the setting up of appeals tribunals under the Sea Fisheries (Conservation) Act 1992; and how many departmental officials and staff were engaged in work related to the setting up of these tribunals on 1 April.

Mr. Jack: Work on the Sea Fish Licence Tribunal has been suspended, and no staff were engaged on this work on 1 April 1994.

Beef

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence she has of damage to the export of British foodstuffs to Germany by the stance of the German Government towards British beef.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* According to Meat and Livestock Commission export survey statistics, beef exports to Germany declined from just under 2,500 tonnes in 1992 to 900 tonnes in 1993. So far in 1994, exports are running at an annualised rate of 300-400 tonnes. In addition, individual companies have given me reports of lost or threatened business for beef and other meats. The promotion of other British products has also been affected.

I have made the European Commission aware of these effects, which amount to an unjustified trade barrier against British goods in the single market.

Fisheries Management

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether Her Majesty's Government intend to propose or introduce effort limitation in respect of United Kingdom-registered vessels currently entitled to fish in the Irish sensitive zone.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* It is the responsibility of the Commission, and not individual member states, to bring forward proposals, by 1 June 1994, for the Community arrangements which will, inter alia, replace the sensitive zone of the Irish box when current provisions expire on 31 December 1995. The regulation concerned specifies that these arrangements must provide for close monitoring of the development of fishing effort deployed and of the state of resources in order that the necessary measures may be taken, where appropriate, to preserve the balance.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what fisheries management arrangements were proposed by her Department at the most recent meeting of the European Commission's working group dealing with the fisheries implications of Spanish accession.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* The implications of the review of the Spanish and Portuguese accession arrangements for fisheries will be the subject of proposals to be made by the Commission by 1 June 1994, for subsequent discussion in Council and decision by the Council itself before 1 January 1995.

Lamb and Sheep Exports

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what tonnage of domestically reared lamb and sheep was exported for each year since 1979; to which countries; and in what form.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 26 April 1994]:* Export data specifically referring to domestically reared lamb and sheep are not available. Total exports of lamb and sheep from the United Kingdom, by destination and form, for years 1979 to 1993, are shown in the following table.

Exports of sheep and sheepmeat
1979 to 1993

Metric tonnes

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*[1]1993*
Live sheep and lambs															
All countries	17,261	14,281	8,026	5,833	4,348	3,564	2,990	5,857	12,767	17,835	22,451	22,225	33,040	52,051	30,712
EC	17,222	14,273	7,934	5,810	4,333	3,555	2,960	5,785	12,760	17,809	22,436	22,217	33,023	51,993	30,709
Of which:															
Belgium/Luxembourg	1,429	1,517	2,689	1,108	993	—	655	482	70	342	981	258	1,568	3,071	3,572

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	[1]1993
Germany[2]	6,257	6,770	1,977	1,136	1,993	1,111	—	161	—	132	467	—	143	1,830	1,060
Irish Republic	9,377	5,623	907	2,169	1,326	1,856	1,662	905	1,921	2,071	2,909	3,133	3,704	2,540	10
France	—	—	2,297	1,394	—	—	—	4,047	10,701	15,175	17,645	18,733	26,943	43,250	24,193
Non-EC	39	8	92	23	15	9	30	72	7	26	15	8	17	58	3
Meat of sheep and lambs[3]—Fresh/chilled/frozen															
All countries	40,922	36,949	37,531	37,041	43,317	47,330	48,701	60,019	71,188	75,985	89,160	79,697	79,960	105,146	95,059
EC	36,630	33,304	32,601	34,676	39,851	44,239	44,441	57,134	68,643	73,689	86,725	77,371	77,810	103,173	92,684
Of which:															
Belgium/Luxembourg	14,126	13,704	6,103	5,584	4,120	4,053	5,983	7,016	7,904	8,068	8,539	8,936	9,362	9,615	10,315
Germany[2]	13,593	13,647	5,138	5,521	4,529	2,977	2,453	2,889	2,544	3,054	3,662	2,784	2,118	4,882	4,174
France	5,107	3,466	19,797	22,246	29,953	35,625	34,550	43,937	53,865	56,625	66,402	55,229	53,383	72,410	65,147
Italy	2,361	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2,262	2,796	2,399	3,502	4,477	4,624	3,849
Spain	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3,822	5,223	1,565	8,380	5,838
Non-EC	4,292	3,645	4,930	2,365	3,466	3,091	4,260	2,885	2,545	2,296	2,435	2,326	2,150	1,973	2,375
Of which:															
Switzerland	1,630	1,529	1,508	1,943	2,271	2,158	2,560	2,450	2,170	1,964	2,177	1,928	1,882	1,557	1,845

[1] Data for 1993 are provisional and subject to revision.
[2] Data pre-1991 covers the Federal Republic only.
[3] Data pre-1988 also includes meat of goats.

Sources:
CSO/Department of Trade Annual Edition of Overseas Trade Statistics and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Official Entertainment

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Lord President of the Council what was the total cost of official entertaining in his office in each year since 1990-91; if he will list the receptions held in each year at his office's expense; and what was the cost of each reception.

Mr. Newton: The cost of official entertainment in the Privy Council Office in 1992-93 was £9,776, and in 1993-94 £9,892. Figures for previous years were not recorded. Expenditure on hospitality is, however, included within the running cost expenditure for my Department which is published each year in the annual report. Expenditure on entertainment covers a variety of functions, including receptions. Details of the expenditure attributable to particular functions could not be provided except at disproportionate cost.

Bolton Institute of Higher Education

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Lord President of the Council when he intends to announce his decision on the application by Bolton Institute of Higher Education in May 1993 for research degree awarding powers under the procedures and criteria formulated by the Higher Education Quality Council.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on 3 May, *Official Report*, column *460*.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many parliamentary questions to his Department have not been answered because of disproportionate costs or because the information requested was not held centrally over the last five years; how many could be answered now due to computerisation and/or more effective operational systems; and if he will list each such question along with the name and constituency of the hon. Member who tabled it.

Mr. Newton: I and my predecessors have answered more than 900 questions, of which 1·7 per cent. have not been answered because of disproportionate costs or because the information requested was not held centrally. Information on how many of these questions could now be answered and details of the questions and the hon. Member who tabled them could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Lord President of the Council what plans he has to ensure that adequate opportunities are made available for full parliamentary scrutiny of agreements made in the GATT negotiations.

Mr. Newton: I have no current plans for a debate on GATT. However, I will certainly keep the matter under consideration.

Christmas Cards

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many official Christmas cards were sent out in 1993 by *(a)* Ministers, *(b)* civil servants and *(c)* staff of Government agencies working in or to his Department; and how much these cards cost (i) to buy, (ii) to post and (iii) in staff time to sign, address and place in envelopes.

Mr. Newton: Last year 175 Christmas cards were sent out by me and 63 were issued by my private office at a cost, including second class postage, of approximately £312. It is not possible to ascertain the staff costs involved.

European Works Councils

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Lord President of the Council, pursuant to his answer of 18 April, *Official Report*, column *371*, about scrutiny of activities of countries of the European Community, what official debate there has been on the proposed EC Council directive on mechanisms for informing and consulting employees in Community-scale undertakings or groups of undertakings prior to the Social Affairs Council of 19 April; and what draft reports have been available to hon. and right hon. Members.

Mr. Newton: The European Commission's proposal for the establishment of European Works Councils—

Council document reference 4466/91—was debated in European Standing Committee B on 3 July 1991. Both it and the subsequent amended proposal—Council document reference 8319/91—have been the subject of explanatory memoranda by the Department of Employment as follows:

4466/91: Explanatory memoranda dated 4 February and 6 March 1991;

8319/91: Explanatory memoranda dated 18 November 1991, 29 January 1992, 24 March, 20 May and 22 October 1993.

The Commission informed the Council on 19 April of its intention to table a revised version of the proposal under the agreement on social policy concluded between 11 member states. The revised proposal will not apply in the United Kingdom.

Former Members

Mr. Meale: To ask the Lord President of the Council (1) if he will list the names of all former hon. Members who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment;

(2) if he will list the names of all former British representative members in the European Parliament who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment;

(3) if he will list the names of all individuals who are or were members of the House of Lords who since 1979 have been appointed to any quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment;

(4) if he will list the names of all living former hon. Members of this House since 1964, giving their seats by region.

Mr. Newton: I regret this information is not available in an easily accessible form and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Executive Agencies

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list for each of the "next steps" agencies now in operation and for each such agency due to come into operation for which the relevant information is available, *(a)* its chairman or chairwoman, *(b)* its chief executive and *(c)* other directors, executives and officers; and if he will set out the annual salary and emoluments for each, together with the cost to public funds, and number of employees, of each agency.

Mr. Waldegrave: There are 96 agencies and the name of the chief executive and the number of staff, as at 1 October 1993, of each is set out in the table. There are a further 56 agency candidates and four chief executives-designate have been appointed, who are also listed.

There are no chairmen or chairwomen; chief executives normally report directly to the responsible Minister. Information on the salaries and emoluments of chief executives and officers and the cost to public funds is not held centrally but can be obtained from the annual reports and accounts of each agency, which are available in the Library of the House. Some of the information will also be available in departmental annual expenditure reports.

Agency	*Chief Executive*	*Staff*
Accounts Services Agency	Michael Hoddinott	95
ADAS	Dr. Julia Walsh	2,320
Army Base Repair Organisation[1]	Brigadier Jim Drew	3,785
Building Research Establishment	Roger Courtney	660
CADW	John Carr	230
Central Office of Information	Mike Devereau	540
Central Science Laboratory	Dr. Peter Stanley	700
Central Statistical Office	Bill McLennan	1,265
Central Veterinary Laboratory	Dr. Tony Little	645
Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment[1]	Dr. Graham Pearson CB	625
Chessington Computer Centre	Bob Edwards	415
Civil Service College	Dr. Stephen Hickey	245
Coastguard	Chris Harris	580
Companies House	David Durham	940
Compensation Agency (Northern Ireland)	John Robinson	150
Defence Accounts Agency	Mike Dymond	2,000
Defence Analytical Services Agency[1]	Paul Altobell	110
Defence Animal Centre[1]	Colonel Paul Jepson	210
Defence Operational Analysis Centre[1]	Dr. David Leadbeater	180
Defence Postal and Courier Services Agency[1]	Brigadier Michael Browne	500
Defence Research Agency[1]	John Chisholm	9,645
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency	Stephen Curtis	4,160
Driver and Vehicle Licensing (Northern Ireland)	Brendan Magee	230
Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency (Northern Ireland)	Brian Watson	250
Driving Standards Agency	Dr. John Ford	1,785
Duke of York's Royal Military School[1]	Colonel Gordon Wilson	100
Employment Service	Mike Fogden	44,245
Fire Service College	Brian Fuller CBE	280
Forensic Science Service	Dr. Janet Thompson	635
Government Property Lawyers	Tony Osborne	130
Highways Agency	Lawrence Haynes	2,400
Historic Royal Palaces	David Beeton	400
Historic Scotland	Graeme Munro	650

Agency	Chief Executive	Staff
Her Majesty's Land Registry	John Manthorpe	8,970
Her Majesty's Prison Service	Derek Lewis	38,105
HMSO	Dr. Paul Freeman CB	2,955
Hydrographic Office[1]	Rear Admiral Nigel Essenhigh	830
Insolvency Service	Peter Joyce	1,585
Intervention Board	Guy Stapleton	925
Laboratory of the Government Chemist	Dr. Richard Worswick	315
Marine Safety Agency	Robin Bradley	350
Medicines Control Agency	Dr. Keith Jones	350
Meteorological Office	Professor Julian Hunt	2,480
Military Survey[1]	Major General Mike Wilson	1,190
National Physical Laboratory	Dr. Peter Clapham CB	755
National Weights and Measures Laboratory	Dr. Seton Bennett	45
Natural Resources Institute	Anthony Beattie	470
Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation[1]	Captain David Symonds	1,560
NEL	William Edgar	345
NHS Estates	John Locke FRICS	105
NHS Pensions Agency	Alec Cowan	530
Northern Ireland Child Support Agency	Pat Devlin	575
Occupational Health Service	Dr. Elizabeth McCloy	120
Ordnance Survey	Professor David Rhind	2,220
Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland	Michael Brand	210
Patent Office	Paul Hartnack	990
Paymaster	Keith Sullens	810
Pesticide Safety Directorate	Geoff Bruce	170
Planning Inspectorate	Stephen Crow	610
Public Record Office	Mrs. Sarah Tyacke	450
Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre	Marcus Buck	70
Queen Victoria School	Julian Haskington	65
Radiocommunications Agency	Jim Norton	530
RAF Support Command's Maintenance Group Defence Agency[1]	Air Vice Marshal Richard Kyle MBE	10,875
RAF Training Group Defence Agency[1]	Air Vice Marshal Chris Coville	8,500
Rate Collection Agency (Northern Ireland)	David Gallagher	280
Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency	Michael Geddes	165
Registers of Scotland	James Barron	1,225
Royal Mint	Roger Holmes	955
Royal Parks Agency	David Welch	265
Scottish Agricultural Science Agency	Dr. Robert Hay	145
Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency	Andrew MacLeod	220
Scottish Office Pensions Agency	Norman McLeod	175
Scottish Prison Service	Edward Prizzell	4,605
Scottish Record Office	Patrick Cadell	115
Security Facilities Executive	John King	1,160
Service Children's Schools (NWE)	Ian Mitchelson	900
Social Security Agency (Northern Ireland)	Alec Wylie	5,290
Social Security Benefits Agency	Michael Bichard	64,885
Social Security Child Support Agency	Mrs. Ros Hepplewhite	4,220
Social Security Contributions Agency	Miss Ann Chant	9,790
Social Security Information Technology Services Agency	Ian Magee	4,220
Social Security Resettlement Agency	Tony Ward	310
Social Security War Pensions Agency	Peter Mathison	1,405
Student Awards Agency for Scotland	Ken MacRae	135
Teachers' Pensions Agency	Mrs. Denyse Metcalfe	325
The Buying Agency	Stephen Sage	95
Training and Employment Agency	Julian Crozier	1,470
Transport Research Laboratory	John Wootton	600
United Kingdom Passport Agency	John Hayzelden	1,285
Valuation and Lands Agency (Northern Ireland)	David Bell	330
Valuation Office	John Langford	4,935
Vehicle Certification Agency	Derek Harvey	75
Vehicle Inspectorate	Ron Oliver	1,655
Veterinary Medicines Directorate	Dr. Mike Rutter	85
Wilton Park Conference Centre	Richard Langhorne	30
Agency Candidates		
Court Service	Michael Huebner	8,210
Medical Devices Directorate	Alan Kent	165
Ministry of Defence Police[1]	John Reddington	5,060
Public Trust Office	Julia Lomas	590

[1]Figures include military personnel.

Parliamentary Accountability

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to improve the accountability to Parliament of quangos and executive agencies.

Mr. Waldegrave: Non-departmental public bodies, formerly called quangos, are fully accountable for the use of public funds. All executive NDPBs publish an annual report and accounts which enable Parliament, the taxpayer and customers to judge whether that NDPB is securing value for money. The National Audit Office, which reports to Parliament, is either the auditor of, or has inspection rights to, all executive NDPBs. The Public Accounts Committee scrutinises the activities of NDPBs closely and may summon the chief executive to give evidence, if necessary.

The Government are committed to applying citizens charter principles to NDPBs and to encouraging executive NDPBs to prepare management statements, as a means of clarifying respective roles and responsibilities. The Government also want to see increasing emphasis placed on the use of performance targets covering financial performance, quality of service and efficiency; and publication of how those targets have been met.

Executive agencies are units within Government which were set up as a result of the "next steps" initiative. All staff in executive agencies are civil servants, or military personnel in defence agencies. They are accountable to Ministers, and through them to Parliament, in the same way as all other civil servants in Departments.

The "next steps" initiative has increased the accountability of whole areas of civil service work, through greater openness and clearer lines of responsibility. The Minister responsible sets each agency a number of annual targets covering efficiency, effectiveness and service to customers. Its performance is monitored by Ministers, and full details are reported to Parliament and published in its annual report and accounts. Agency chief executives may be called before the PAC and other Select Committees to account for the discharge of their responsibilities. However, the main line of accountability remains to the Minister, who is in turn accountable to Parliament.

Privatisation (Consultants)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will estimate the cost of employing consultants in connection with privatisation programmes in which his Department has been engaged.

Mr. Waldegrave: There has been no such expenditure by the Office of Public Service and Science.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Material (Transport by Rail)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if British Transport Police are informed of the movement by rail of nuclear warheads and nuclear material; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The British Transport police are informed whenever nuclear submarine fuel cores are transported by rail. Rail transport is not used for the movement of our nuclear warheads.

HMS Unseen

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how long HMS Unseen and her sister submarine have been in active service; when it is planned to withdraw them from service; what has been the cost to his Department of maintaining these vessels to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The four Upholder class submarines were accepted by the Royal Navy from builders on the following dates:

HMS Upholder—6 December 1990
HMS Unseen—19 July 1991
HMS Ursula—2 June 1992
HMS Unicorn—23 July 1993

HMS Unseen and HMS Upholder were withdrawn from service on 6 April and 28 April 1994 respectively. Although it is not our practice to reveal the planned pay-off dates of individual vessels, we have previously made clear that the entire class will be withdrawn by 1995.

The cost incurred in maintaining the vessels of the Upholder class since their acceptance from builders has been approximately £2,690,000.

Naval Exercises (English Channel)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which area of the English channel was closed to traffic on 5 and 6 April due to a Sea Wolf missile failing to explode during a Royal Navy exercise.

Mr. Hanley: On 5 April, HMS Brazen was conducting routine training off Portland Bill, Dorset, which involved firing Sea Wolf missiles. Due to a minor technical malfunction, one missile veered off its intended course and fell into the sea. As a purely precautionary measure, the Portland naval authorities alerted HM Coastguard. A safety broadcast, advising shipping to avoid a 2-mile radius around the point where the missile fell into the sea, was issued immediately. Once it became clear that there was no risk to traffic in the area, HM Coastguard was advised and the safety broadcast was cancelled. The Sea Wolf is a fragile missile which travels at high speed and would almost certainly have disintegrated on impact with the sea.

Recruitment

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many military recruiting establishments are currently operating throughout the United Kingdom; how many of these lie in Scotland; how many recruits have been recruited through these facilities; what plans he has to rationalise these facilities; and what is the annual cost of operating these facilities.

Mr. Hanley: At present, there are 251 service careers information offices in the United Kingdom. Of these, 31 are located in Scotland. In the financial year 1993-94, 10,494 personnel were recruited, of whom, 1,117 were recruited in Scotland. These recruiting figures reflect reduced targets as a result of the force restructuring under "Options for Change". The operating costs of the CIOs totalled £45,090,000 in financial year 1993-94, of which £5,320,000 related to the offices in Scotland.

It is our policy to collocate CIOs in bi-service or tri-service premises wherever practicable and cost-effective. Many CIOs are already collocated and future requirements are kept under regular review. In addition, recruitment arrangements are being considered as part of the "Defence Costs Study".

South African National Defence Force

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role his military representatives will play in the integration of the new national defence force in South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him to an identical question on 27 April, *Official Report*, column 227.

Market Testing

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what sections of his Department he plans to make the subject of market testing.

Mr. Aitken: The Department intends to pursue vigorously market testing opportunities across the whole range of defence support activities with the aim of maximising value for money for the defence budget. The "Defence Costs Study" will, however, have a significant influence on the scale of the future programme and decisions on future plans will therefore be taken in the light of the outcome of the study.

Bosnia

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many troops there are currently on active service in Bosnia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: There are currently some 3,500 British service personnel deployed on the ground in Bosnia and Croatia in support of United Nations peacekeeping operations. In addition, there are some 3,000 service personnel deployed offshore and in Italy in support of operations in the region.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British aircraft there are in use in Bosnia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: There are currently 33 British aircraft, both rotary and fixed wing, deployed in the Adriatic theatre in support of United Nations and NATO operations in the former Yugoslavia.

Royal Devonport Dockyard

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total amount paid to consultants by his Department for work concerned with the privatisation of HM Royal Devonport dockyard.

Mr. Aitken: Since October, when my right hon. and learned Friend announced our policy towards the future management of the royal dockyards, *Official Report*, 18 October 1993, columns 39-41, total expenditure of some £2 million has been incurred in the use of specialist consultants for work related to the proposed privatisation of the royal dockyards. Costs attributable to Devonport cannot be separately identified.

Privatisation (Consultants)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the cost of employing consultants in connection with privatisation programmes in which his Department has been engaged since 1980.

Mr. Aitken: The only privatisation programme for which information on the use of consultants can be made available without disproportionate cost and effort is that in connection with the proposed privatisation of the royal dockyards at Devonport and Rosyth, about which my right hon. and learned Friend made an announcement on 18 October last, *Official Report*, columns 39-41. I refer the hon. Member to the answer I have given today to the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson).

Defence Budget

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the reason for the removal from the defence budget from 1994-95 of the financial provisions for the security and intelligence services, as set out in note one to figure 10 of paragraph 502 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1994", Cm. 2550.

Mr. Hanley: As foreshadowed by the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Robinson) on 24 November 1993, *Official Report*, column *52*, expenditure on the security and intelligence services has been brought together into a single Cabinet Office vote from 1994-95—class XIX, vote 2.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Bosnia

17. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with Mr. Slobodan Milosevic regarding Bosnia.

Mr. Hurd: I have not met President Milosevic since the European Union Foreign Ministers' meeting with the parties in November 1993. My right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is meeting President Milosevic in Belgrade today.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what offers he has made to international relief agencies to treat casualties of the Bosnian war in British hospitals.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have told the International Organisation for Migration, which is responsible for the placement abroad of patients from Bosnia, that we will consider applications on a case-by-case basis. After the recent events in Gorazde, we exceptionally agreed to take up to 50 of those wounded by the shelling.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information is available from the International Red Cross, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other United Nations sources about the number of people who require major medical attention which, because of the war, cannot be met within Bosnia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees medical committee has to date identified 763 patients in need of medical treatment unavailable in Bosnia. Of these, 626 patients have already been evacuated, 41 have places abroad and are waiting to travel, and 96 are awaiting placement.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what requests are being made by the Red Cross and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for medical attention to the wounded from the war in Bosnia; and what representations they have made about the adequacy of the international response when those wounded people cannot be treated in Bosnia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Both the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross have issued appeals for their operations in the former Yugoslavia, which include provision for medical supplies and health care. The International Organisation for Migration appealed to Governments in August 1993 for offers of hospital places for patients from the former Yugoslavia who could not be treated locally. As a result, 2,277 places were offered by 33 countries.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many patients injured in the war in Bosnia each European Union country has treated in its own hospitals.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Statistics do not distinguish between patients injured in the war and patients who are seriously ill and cannot be treated locally. The latest figures from the International Organisation for Migration are as follows: Belgium: 25; Denmark: 87; France: 10; Germany: 19; Greece: 19; Ireland: 23; Italy: 134; Luxembourg: 5; Netherlands: 15; Portugal: 0; Spain: 16; United Kingdom: 66.

28. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the state of Bosnia has now been taken by the Serbs as a result of military action.

Mr. Hurd: The Bosnian Serb army controls about 70 per cent. of the republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. A substantial Bosnian Serb withdrawal from territory it now holds will be an essential element in any future peace settlement.

23. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what British interests are served by involvement of British troops in Bosnia.

Mr. Hurd: It is a British interest to ensure that the war in Bosnia does not spread. It is in keeping with our interests and our position in the UN, EU and NATO that a negotiated settlement should be achieved. We have a responsibility to help relieve human suffering in this tragic corner of Europe.

The presence of UN troops is necessary to underpin the international diplomatic and humanitarian effort and to help restore regional peace and security. The British military contribution, although not the largest, is extremely effective.

European Union

18. **Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his European Union counterparts about the public accountability and openness of European Union decision-making.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The General Affairs Council has had a number of discussions aimed at making the European Union more open and accountable, which led to agreements at the end of last year on the publication of votes and public access to documents. The United Kingdom strongly supports these moves.

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a statement on the forthcoming business in the Council of the European Union.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The following meetings are planned:

6 May:	Development Council
16 May:	ECOFIN Council
16/17 May:	FAC Council
25 May:	Energy Council
26 May:	Education Council
27 May:	Tourism Council
30 May:	Telecommuncations Council
30/31 May:	Agriculture Council

(a) *Development Council: 6 May*
Agenda not yet available.

(b) *ECOFIN Council: 16 May*
White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment.
Recent developments in the European Economy.
Financial assistance to Central and Eastern Europe and to the Former Soviet Union.
Deposit Guarantee.
Fraud.

Lunch.
Preparation for Joint meeting with Central and Eastern European Finance Ministers at 6 June ECOFIN.

(c) *Foreign Affairs Council: 16–17 May*
White Paper follow-up.
CFSP financing.
EC/Egypt: preparation of Cooperation Council.
Preparation of EEA Council.
Russia: partnership agreement.
Relations with Ukraine.
Relations with Switzerland.
Ex-Yugoslavia.
Stability Pact: economic incentives.
Relations with EP in Titles V and VI of the Treaty of European Union.
(Possible) Textiles: inward processing relief.
(Possible) Classified documents.
(Possible) Committee of Regions: Rules of Procedure.
(Possible) Enlargement: Council decision under Article 0 of the Treaty of European Union.
Public access to Council documents.
Site of European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training.

In the margins:
Cooperation Council with Egypt.
EEA Council.

(d) *Energy Council: 25 May*
Electricity liberalisation: Orientation Debate.
Energy TENs Guidelines: Political Agreement.
Energy Policy.
Energy and Cohesion: Council conclusions.
Nuclear Safety assistance for Central and Eastern Europe and for the Commonwealth of Independent States.
Energy Charter Treaty: stocktake.
(Possible) Commission proposal on Thermie II: Commission presentation.

(e) *Education Council: 26 May*
Agenda not yet arrived.

(f) *Tourism Council: 27 May*
Agenda not yet arrived.

(g) *Telecommunications Council: 30 May*
Agenda not yet arrived.

(h) *Agriculture Council: 30–31 May*
Plant Breeders rights.
(Possible) Uniform Principles.
(Possible) Price Fixing.
(Possible) Milk Quotas.
(Possible) Wine Regime.
(Possible) Revision of rules on structural support.

South Korea

21. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to visit South Korea; and if he will make a statement on United Kingdom relations with South Korea.

Mr. Goodlad: My right honourable Friend the Foreign Secretary has no plans to visit South Korea in the immediate future. I last visited Seoul in January this year. The United Kingdom's relations with South Korea are excellent.

Bulgaria

22. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Bulgarian authorities following the incidents involving the Bulgarian police and supporters of Rangers football club following the latter's European Cup match in Sofia last September.

Mr. Goodlad: Following complaints received by Glasgow Rangers fans about their treatment by the Bulgarian police, the embassy in Sofia made formal representations to the Bulgarian authorities on 23 November 1993. A reminder was sent on 22 December and again on 8 March. No reply has yet been received. We will continue to press the Bulgarian authorities.

Eastern Europe

24. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the effectiveness of the know-how fund in making east Europeans aware of democracy and free markets.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The know-how fund is generally well regarded for the effectiveness of the advice and expertise which it provides to help the countries of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union move towards democracy and free market economies. Both the President and the Prime Minister of Russia commented favourably on the quality of know-how fund support to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister during his recent visit.

Council of Europe

26. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy towards the enlargement of the Council of Europe.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The United Kingdom welcomes the accession of countries which meet the criteria laid down in the statute of the Council of Europe.

Foreign Affairs Council

27. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what particular issues he intends to raise for consideration at the next meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council of the European Union.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The agenda for the next Foreign Affairs Council on 16-17 May has not yet been agreed. It is too early to say what particular issues we shall wish to raise.

Italy

29. **Mr. Heald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contacts he has had with the new Government in Italy.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The new Italian Government are not yet in place. When they are, we shall look forward to working closely with our new Italian colleagues.

Cross-border Enforcement

30. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he hopes to meet the President of the European Commission to discuss cross-border enforcement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I meet the President of the European Commission regularly, and we discuss a range of issues.

Kashmir

31. **Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Prime Minister of India, or his representatives, regarding Kashmir.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary discussed the situation in Kashmir when he met the Indian Prime Minister in March during his visit to Britain.

Russia

32. **Ms Rachel Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met representatives of the Russian Government to discuss security and co-operation in Europe.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: When my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary visited Moscow in February, they discussed a range of issues with members of the Russian Government, including security and co-operation in Europe. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mamedov recently discussed these issues in London with my right honourable and learned Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in which countries along the border of the former Soviet Union Russian forces are currently deployed.

Mr. Goodlad: There are currently Russian forces in Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, the Transcaucasus and Central Asia, as well as in Latvia and Estonia.

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the Russian plan to establish or confirm bases in countries which formerly belonged to the Soviet Union.

Mr. Goodlad: There have been reports that Russia intends to establish or confirm up to 30 bases in the rest of the former Soviet Union, on the basis of agreement with the Governments of the countries concerned.

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those countries in which Russian forces are currently deployed *(a)* with the agreement of the Government concerned and *(b)* without agreement.

Mr. Goodlad: Moldova has asked for the withdrawal of the Russian 14th army. The future of the Black sea fleet is currently under discussion between Russia and Ukraine. An agreement has been signed between Russia and Latvia on withdrawals of Russian troops from Latvia by 31 August. Estonia is seeking the withdrawal of Russian troops by 31 August. We are not aware of objections, on the part of the Governments concerned, to the presence of Russian troops in any other countries where they are currently stationed.

37. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Russian Foreign Secretary about Russia's intentions in its near abroad.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary discussed Russia's policy towards the other states of the former Soviet Union with the Russian Foreign Minister, Mr. Kozyrev, when he was in Moscow with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in February.

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

33. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has held with representatives of central and Latin American Governments relating to the GATT agreement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I discussed this issue regularly with representatives of central and Latin American Governments in the period leading up to the Marrakesh ministerial meeting. I underlined the importance of the round and the need for rapid conclusion and implementation. With certain banana-producing countries which were also GATT contracting parties I also urged them to accept the Commission's banana offer so that this could be included as part of the Uruguay round.

European Political Union

34. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet his counterparts in the European Union to discuss greater political union.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There are no plans for a meeting of Community Foreign Ministers to discuss greater political union.

European Union

35. **Mr. Pickthall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his European Union counterparts about the public accountability and openness of European decision-making.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The General Affairs Council has had a number of discussions aimed at making the European Union more open and accountable, which led to agreements at the end of last year on the publication of votes and public access to documents. The United Kingdom strongly supports these moves.

Iran

36. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth affairs if he will make a statement about relations between Iran and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We restored our relations with Iran on 27 September 1990 on the basis of mutual respect and non-interference in each others' affairs.

The revelation of Iran—Provisional IRA links and the fatwa against Mr. Rushdie demonstrate why Iran's behaviour continues to cause us and other European member states serious concern.

It remains the case that improved behaviour will be important in determining the extent to which closer relations with, and confidence in, Iran can be developed.

Foreign Service (BBC Documentary)

38. **Ms Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the effect of the BBC documentary on the Foreign Service on the public's opinion of that service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No such assessment has been made, but I enjoyed the programme immensely.

Falkland Islands

39. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his recent visit to the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The visit by my right hon. Friend was the first by a Foreign Secretary. He received a warm welcome. The islanders are proud of their way of life and much attached to it and to the United Kingdom. They are confident about the future. He reassured them that sovereignty was not for discussion and that we would continue to support their right to self-determination. Clearly life would be simpler if Argentina dropped her claim.

Somalia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent theft of money from the United Nations compound in Mogadishu in Somalia; and what action is now being taken on this matter.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The matter is being investigated by United Nations civil police and a team from the United Nations investigations unit. It would be imprudent to comment further before these investigations are complete.

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much of the £237,000 of departmental funds lost in Somalia in 1992-93 indicated in the appropriations accounts was *(a)* lost in transit and *(b)* lost from balances in the embassy bank accounts; how these losses occurred; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The loss of £237,000 occurred as follows:

(a) £130,000 lost in transit consisted of three fundings sent to the Bank of Somalia in 1989 for the credit of the Embassy account. Exhaustive inquiries with the Bank of England and the National Westminster Bank, the United Kingdom intermediary bank of the transactions, confirmed that this account had been sent to Somalia. Embassy staff investigated these missing items but were unable to locate them before they were evacuated following the collapse of law and order in Somalia. The decision to write off this sum was taken in 1992 because it was considered very unlikely that the bank of Somalia would ever be able to locate these missing funds following the extensive looting which occurred in Mogadishu.

(b) £103,000 from embassy bank accounts and £4,000 cash and miscellaneous items less some small recoveries were shown in the balances of the last imprest account submitted to the FCO before the evacuation. As the embassy and its bank in Somalia had been looted it was considered unlikely that these assets would ever be recovered.

Due to the complete collapse of law and order all diplomatic missions in Mogadishu were withdrawn and it was not possible to follow the usual procedures for protecting departmental funds overseas. There continues to be no recognised Government or banking system in Somalia.

North Korea

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what explanation North Korea gave for its withdrawal from the nuclear non-proliferation treaty; and if he will make a statement on the prospects of that country's return to the treaty.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: North Korea announced its intention to withdraw from the non-proliferation treaty under article X (i) on 12 March 1993. North Korea cited the joint United States-South Korea military exercise Team Spirit, and the International Atomic Energy Authority's request for special inspections of its nuclear facilities, as being grounds for withdrawal. North Korea subsequently suspended its intention to withdraw from the treaty on 11 June. We continue to urge North Korea to resolve all suspicions about its nuclear programme by complying fully with its safeguards agreement and by affirming permanent commitment to the NPT.

Macedonia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Bulgarian and Romanian co-operation in the installation of a United Nations presence in Macedonia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Equipment destined for UNPROFOR Macedonia passed through Romania and Bulgaria and reached the Bulgaria/Macedonia border on 18 April. UNPROFOR Macedonia has taken delivery of the equipment.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent report he has received of armed Serbian activity around the border with Macedonia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have had no recent reports of any armed Serbian activity on the Macedonian border.

Hamas

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to him by the Government of Israel about the activities of Hamas within Britain.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have regular contact with the Israelis on a wide range of issues.

Brazil

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arms sales were discussed during his recent visit to Brazil; and what plans he has to make an announcement on this.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs reaffirmed the importance of the continuing partnership between British defence equipment suppliers and Brazil's armed forces, exemplified by the recent sale of Super Lynx helicopters to the Brazilian navy. He also discussed prospects for future sales.

Georgia

×**Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the Government of Georgia; whether British know-how fund assistance was offered; and if he will make a statement on the state of relations with Georgia.

Mr. Goodlad: We have regular contacts with the Georgian Government through our ambassador in Moscow. In addition, my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs also met senior advisers to President Shevardnadze last week. Know-how fund assistance is already available to Georgia and in 1993 we spent £71,000. The United Kingdom also contributed over £2 million in humanitarian relief since March 1993.

Relations between the United Kingdom and Georgia are good. We continue to emphasise the need for co-operation with the UN and CSCE in seeking a peaceful solution to disputes on Georgian territory.

Security

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the use of private detective agencies and security companies by his Department.

Mr. Goodlad: There is no record of the FCO ever having employed a private detective agency. Up to now the only recorded instance of the FCO employing a private security company in the United Kingdom was for the guarding of Wiston House conference centre for six months in 1992-93. However, under the market testing programme, six private security companies have been invited to tender, along with an in-house team, for guarding all FCO premises in London from 3 January 1995. The result will be announced in August.

We do not keep central records of security companies employed at our posts overseas.

Libya

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made as to the effect of current sanctions in respect of medical supplies upon Libya in respect of *(a)* the poor and *(b)* women and children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The supply of medical products is not prohibited under the current United Nations sanctions against Libya. As a matter of general principle, with which the United Kingdom agrees, the supply of medicines is exempt from the effects of all United Nations sanctions regimes.

Occupied Territories

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the effect of the closure of the occupied territories by the Israel Government on the economic life of the Palestinians and the peace process; and what representations he has made to the Israeli Government.

Mr. Goodlad: We welcome the agreement reached in Paris on 29 April between Israel and the PLO on economic aspects of Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho, including the movement of goods and labour between the Palestinian areas and Israel.

Argentina and Brazil

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with Argentina and Brazil.

Mr. Goodlad: On Argentina I would refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman).

Our relations with Brazil are excellent. On his recent visit with a party of senior business men, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs was able to see for himself how dynamic the Brazilian economy is and what opportunities there are for the United Kingdom. The Brazilian Foreign Minister has accepted his invitation to visit Britain later this year. Increasingly the United Kingdom and Brazil share a common international agenda.

Angola

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commownealth Affairs what discussions he has had with EU Ministers on the situation in Angola.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There are regular working level discussions of Angola at meetings in the framework of the common foreign and security policy.

Occupied Territories

Mr. Sykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance Her Majesty's Government are providing bilaterally and through the EC for a Palestinian police force in the occupied territories.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom is providing 200 sets of riot-control equipment and organising training courses in the United Kingdom for senior police officers. The European Union has adopted a joint action which provides for up to ecu 10 million in grant funds from the Community budget towards the Palestinian police force. The United Kingdom played a leading role in stimulating the European Union contribution.

EMPLOYMENT

Self-employment

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on what is currently being done to encourage people to be self-employed; and what further changes he will make.

Miss Widdecombe: The business start-up scheme encourages unemployed people to set up their own new businesses. It offers a weekly allowance together with business training and counselling. Nearly 700,000 people have entered the scheme to date. The budget for the scheme has been transferred to the Department of Environment's single regeneration budget, one of the aims of which is the encouragement of sustainable economic growth and wealth creation by improving the competitiveness of the local economy, including business support.

The Department supports the Prince's Youth Business Trust in making funds available to disadvantaged young people to set up their own businesses. We have recently agreed additional funding to help the trust in its aim of doubling the number of young people it supports.

My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is developing a network of business links, which will provide world class support to business—including those who are contemplating starting a new business.

TRANSPORT

M25

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what cost-benefit analysis his Department has undertaken of the delays experienced by motorists in roadworks for widening the M25 compared with the final benefits of a widened road; when he anticipates road widening on the M25 will be completed; and what will be the total cost of widening the M25.

Mr. Key: This question relates to operational matters of the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive, Mr. Lawrie Haynes, to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. John Spellar, dated 29 April 1994:

The Minister for Roads and Traffic, Mr. Robert Key, has asked me to write to you in reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the M25.

The cost of delays to motorists caused by construction works is assessed as part of the overall economic cost benefit analysis of motorway widening schemes. The results of this analysis are published as part of the assessment framework for each scheme.

We have recently completed widening the M25 to dual four lanes between junctions 15 (M4) and 16 (M40) and two further schemes are under way between junctions 7 (M23)—8 (Reigate) and junctions 10 (A3)—11 (Chertsey) for completion during next year. Other schemes for widening most of the M25 to dual four lanes within the highway boundary were included in the recent review of the road programme and details published in the 1994

Review report. The total cost of widening to dual four lanes between junctions 5–28 (excluding junctions 11–15 which has been dual four lanes for some time) is approximately £672 million. Subject to the availability of funds, all these schemes should be completed over about the next 10 years.

There are also schemes in the programme for increasing the capacity of the western section of the motorway beyond dual four lanes. Two of these, between junctions 12 (M3)—15 (M4) and between junctions 15–16 (M40), have an estimated total cost of some £231 million. The timetable for construction of these schemes would depend on the time needed to complete the statutory procedures and the availability of funds. Widening beyond dual four lanes is also under consideration for the length between junctions 10 (A3) and 12 (M3) but the form of any scheme, and hence its cost, is not yet known.

M25 Programme

Construction schemes	*Status and Cost £ million*
Widening to D4	
Junctions 3 (M20)—5 (M26)	Longer term scheme, to be reviewed later.
Junctions 5 (M26)—7 (M23)	Priority 2 scheme, programme to be reviewed. Cost: £101·1.
Junctions 7 (M23)—8 (Reigate)	Works started in March 1994. Construction expected to take about 15 months. Cost £63·5.
Junctions 8 (Reigate)—10 (A3)	Proposals published February 1994 with work likely to get underway early 1995. Cost: £78·2.
Junctions 10 (A3)—11 (A320)	Works started in February 1994. Construction expected to take about 12 months. Cost: £50·5.
Junctions 11—15	Already D4 standard
Junctions 15 (M4)—16 (M40)	Construction started 4 January 1993. The works completed end April 1994. Cost: 35·3.
Junctions 16 (M40)—19 (Watford)	Proposals published February 1994. Public exhibitions held and comments are now being considered. Cost: 71·3
Junctions 19 (Watford)—23 (A1)	Priority 2 scheme, programme to be reviewed. Cost: 86·5.
Junctions 23 (A1)—26 (A121)	Details published February and comments are now being considered. Cost: £81·1.
Junctions 26 (A121)—28 (A12)	Priority 2 scheme, programme to be reviewed. Cost: £104.
Capacity beyond dual four lanes	
Junctions 3 (M20)—10 (A3) and Junctions 21A (M1)—30 (A13)	Announced on 22 July 1993 that for foreseeable future there would be no widening beyond dual four lanes for these sections which make up some 70 per cent. of M25.
Junctions 10 (A3)—12 (M3)	Consultants appointed October 1992 to study options. Proposals may be published Autumn 1994. Cost: £123·9.
Junctions 12 (M3)—15 (M4)	Draft highway orders published 7 April 1994. Already announced that public inquiry will have to be held, probably towards the end of this year. Cost: £164·3.
Junctions 15 (M4)—16 (M40)	Decision to proceed to order publication state with proposals for 2 lane link roads announced on 30 March. Cost: £66·2.
Junctions 16 (M40)—21A (M1)	No work on feasibility of providing capacity beyond D4 will be undertaken for many years.
Junction Improvement	
Junctions 30 (A13)—31(A1306)	Consultants appointed 1 January 1994. Cost: £43·5.

A40

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to review the various speed limits on the A40 between the A40 (M) and the M40.

Mr. Norris: This question raises an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked Lawrie Haynes, the chief executive, to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Peter Luff, dated 26 April 1994:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your question about his plans for reviewing the various speed limits on the A40 between the A40(M) and the M40 because this is now an operational matter for the Highways Agency.

Much has been, and still is being done to improve the length of the A40 in question and it is important to ensure current speed limits reflect today's conditions. Accordingly we intend to review the speed limit on the length between Hanger Lane and the Polish Memorial Junction later this year after the Traffic Director has announced his plans for red route measures for the road. Reviews of the speed limits elsewhere on the A40 will follow as and when the major improvement schemes currently under construction at Long Lane and Northolt Airport are completed at the end of the year, and when those planned at Gypsy Corner and Western Circus have been undertaken.

Annual Staff Reports

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 21 February, *Official Report*, column *86*, if he will list by annual staff report box marking for the same reporting year the numbers of male grade sevens receiving box 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 performance markings.

Mr. Norris: In the reporting year 1991-92, 29 grade 7 males received box 1; 322 box 2; 260 box 3: and 3 box 4 ASR markings. No male grade 7 received a box 5 marking.

Vehicle Excise Duty

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 21 February, *Official Report*, column *81*, what targets and budgets he has set for the collection of unpaid vehicle excise duty.

Mr. Key: On the question of targets I refer the hon. Member to the answer of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 29 April, column *385*. The agreed budget to carry out this work during 1994-95 is around £27 million.

Civil Aviation Authority

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will report progress on the privatisation of the Civil Aviation Authority.

Mr. Norris: We announced at the time of the 1993 Budget that we were asking a group of officials to examine whether the national air traffic services of the Civil Aviation Authority could be privatised. This group has now reported and we are considering its recommendations. We hope to announce our response shortly.

Vehicle Excise Duty

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total amount of revenue that was collected in vehicle excise duty in each of the last three years.

Mr. Key: Net vehicle excise duty, after refunds, collected in the last three financial years was:

Year	*£ millions*
1991-92	2,931
1992-93	3,225
1993-94[1]	3,655

[1] Provisional.

Motorway Pollution

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what steps he is taking to improve the treatment of surface water from motorways and other trunk roads so that it does not cause pollution;

(2) what steps he is taking to ensure that all surface water run off from *(a)* existing motorways and *(b)* new motorways, is properly treated before discharge to the environment; and what are the implications for construction and maintenance costs for ensuring all surface water from motorways is properly treated;

(3) what assessment he has made of the future cost implications to his Department of the out-of-court settlement in respect of the case brought by Mr. Mohamed Al Fayed for pollution of his land by run-off from the M25; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what assessment he has made of the likelihood of future legal actions from people who have suffered as the result of pollution from motorways; and what contingency fund his Department has for such actions.

Mr. Key: These four questions relate to operational matters of the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive, Mr. Lawrie Haynes, to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Ms Joan Walley, dated 4 May 1994:

The Minister for Roads and Traffic, Mr. Robert Key, has asked me to write to you in reply to your recent four Parliamentary questions about the treatment of surface water from motorways and other trunk roads.

The Highways Agency is now responsible for research previously commissioned by the Department of Transport jointly with the National Rivers Authority on the design of highway drainage systems to avoid pollution problems. When the research has been completed I expect to issue advice to designers and those responsible for maintaining the drainage systems.

The out-of-court settlement in the case you mentioned reflected the particular circumstances of that case and cannot be taken to have implications for situations elsewhere. The settlement involved damages of £5,000 and agreed works to the drainage system likely to cost in the order of £60,000. In addition there will be legal costs of an amount yet to be agreed.

In the case of existing motorways, the arrangements for treating surface water run off before discharge to the environment have been accepted by the relevant water regulatory authority. The arrangements for new motorways will be considered within the environmental assessment and agreed with the water regulatory authority. We are currently reviewing the implications for construction and maintenance costs.

The Department does not, in general, assess the likelihood of future legal actions from people who claim to have suffered as a result of pollution from motorways and no contingency fund is kept for such actions.

Detective Agencies

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones) of 25 April, *Official Report*, column 42, if he will list all contracts with private detective agencies for the purpose of collecting evidence and serving papers on those who have trespassed on his Department's land, and the expenditure to date on each; how many former employees were inadvertently overpaid; and what was the total sum involved.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* A single detective agency has been employed to serve papers and collect evidence on those who have trespassed on the Department's land. The recorded expenditure stands at £250,829·52p.

Detective agencies have also been used in connection with inadvertent overpayment of 15 staff, totalling £22,030·06p. Of this sum, £17,556·76p has been or is being recovered.

SCOTLAND

Correspondence

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what percentage of letters sent by his office to hon. Members are written in the Gaelic language;

(2) if it is his practice to sign personally letters in reply to hon. Members which are written in the Gaelic language.

Sir Hector Monro: Neither my right hon. Friend nor his office has had occasion to write to hon. Members in Gaelic.

Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenston Bypass

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions the Scottish Office has had with the appropriate authorities concerning the implementation of plans for the Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenston bypass; and when he expects the project to be started.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Officials have consulted regularly with district council officers. They have been made aware of the further work being undertaken to identify the best layout for a bypass. A further meeting has been arranged for May to explain the progress which has been made while these studies continue.

At this stage it is not possible to predict when work on construction might start.

Colorado Beetle

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent reports he has received about sightings of Colorado Beetle *(a)* tendered voluntarily and *(b)* in response to requests; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: So far this year six Colorado beetles have been found in Scotland, as a result of inspections undertaken by officials of the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department.

Colorado beetle is a notifiable quarantine pest under the Plant Health (Great Britain) Order 1993 and the United Kingdom is recognised as a protected zone against this pest under the EU single market plant health arrangements. Each year the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department conducts a publicity campaign which has helped to increase public awareness of the pest.

No breeding colony has ever been established in Scotland or elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Strathclyde PTA

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what will be the future boundaries of the Strathclyde passenger transport authority.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The future boundaries of the Strathclyde passenger transport area will be decided in due course after consultation with appropriate bodies. It is not expected that there will be any reduction in the present area, but there may be some increase.

Fish Conservation

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions since the decision to suspend the operation of the Sea Fisheries (Conservation) Act 1992 pending a decision of the European Court of Justice he or other Ministers have met representatives of the Scottish fishing industry to discuss alternative conservation strategies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary with responsibility for agriculture and fisheries in Scotland, my noble and learned Friend the Minister of State and I have all met representatives of the Scottish fishing industry since 14 December 1993. In addition, my officials are in constant contact with fishermen's organisations regarding conservation issues.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what expenditure has been incurred by his Department *(a)* up to 31 December 1993 and *(b)* since 1 January 1994 in making preparations, including the purchase of equipment, for the implementation of the Sea Fisheries (Conservation) Act 1992.

Mr. Lang: Total expenditure on staff and associated costs up to 31 December 1993 amounted to approximately £140,000. Expenditure after 1 January 1994 totalled £16,000.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what amount of computer hardware and software has been purchased by his Department for the purposes of implementing the provisions of the Sea Fisheries (Conservation) Act 1992.

Mr. Lang: None.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many officials of his Department were engaged in work related to the implementation of the Sea Fisheries (Conservation) Act 1992 on 31 December 1993; and how many officials continue to be engaged in work related to the implementation of this Act.

Mr. Lang: At the beginning of December 1993, seven officials were responsible for assessing fishermen's representations against their provisional days-at-sea allocations. Since then all have been redeployed.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements are in place for the setting up of appeals

tribunals under the Sea Fisheries (Conservation) Act 1992; and how many departmental officials and staff were engaged in work related to the setting up of these tribunals on 1 April.

Mr. Lang: Work on the sea fish licence tribunal has been suspended and no staff were engaged on this work on 1 April 1994.

Temporary Sheriffs

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many temporary sheriffs hold commissions to serve in sheriff courts in Scotland; how many sessions were undertaken by temporary sheriffs in each of the past five years; how many temporary sheriffs were employed in the Scottish courts for more than 80 per cent. of the available court sitting days in each of the past five years; what is the current daily rate paid to a temporary sheriff; what was the total cost to his Department of temporary sheriffs during the same period; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 21 April 1994]:* One hundred and seven temporary sheriffs hold commissions to serve in sheriff courts in Scotland. The current daily fee paid to temporary sheriffs is £246. Information is provided on the number of sitting days undertaken, the usage made of temporary sheriffs and the total costs.

Court sitting days provided by temporary sheriffs

	Number
1989	4,046
1990	4,236
1991	5,147
1992	6,093
1993	6,660

Number of temporary sheriffs who sat for more than 80 per cent. of available sitting days

	Number
1989	0
1990	3
1991	3
1992	5
1993	4

	Total costs (£)
1989-90	950,000
1990-91	952,000
1991-92	1,512,000
1992-93	2,041,000
1993-94	2,308,000

The services of temporary sheriffs have contributed significantly to reducing inconvenience to court users resulting from cancellation of court sittings and to avoiding increases in court delays due to increases in workloads. The average waiting period for summary criminal trials at the end of 1993 was the lowest recorded over the past five years.

Police (Firearms)

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what firearms training police officers undergo who carry out duties *(a)* as an authorised firearms officer, *(b)* as a member of the tactical firearms unit, *(c)* as a CID firearms officer and *(d)* as a member of the firearms training department; and with what frequency in each case;

(2) if he will make a statement on the availability for call out of each category of firearms officers.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* Firearm training undertaken by police officers in Scotland is carried out in strict compliance with the manual of guidance on the police use of firearms adopted by the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland. Training input varies from force to force. In general, authorised firearms officers receive training on weapon handling and safety, firearms tactics, administration of firearms incidents and shooting skills. Where forces have tactical firearms units, or their equivalent, officers in them receive additional training which includes instruction on rapid intervention techniques. In forces which deploy them, CID firearms officers undergo the same training as authorised firearms officers and, if appropriate, receive additional specialised training in VIP protection duties. Officers who are members of firearms training departments have in most cases successfully completed the national firearms instructor's course conducted at one of the national police firearms training centres. In addition some personnel have undertaken a national bodyguard's course, a national rifleman's course and a local marksman's course.

Length of initial training also varies from force to force. On average authorised firearms officers receive 11 days' training; members of tactical firearms units, or their equivalent, receive 25 days' training; CID firearms officers receive 15 days' training; and members of firearms training departments receive 18 days' training. In each case refresher training is provided annually.

Chief constables can deploy police officers who have undergone firearm training in each category on a 24-hour basis.

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many police officers in *(a)* the Strathclyde police area and *(b)* Scotland are authorised to carry firearms;

(2) on how many occasions in the last two years police firearms have been discharged in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* There are currently 210 police officers in Strathclyde police authorised to carry firearms and a total of 712 officers in Scotland. Police firearms have been discharged on six occasions in the last two years in Scotland.

Public Appointments

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the *(a)* name, *(b)* occupation or former occupation, *(c)* place of residence, *(d)* date of appointment and *(e)* salary, honorarium or allowance of the highest-earning 20 people appointed by him to any organisation or body, both inclusive and exclusive of expenses for travel, subsistence and other items in the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* This information is not held centrally and culd be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The level of any salary or fee paid to a member of a nationalised industry, non-departmental public body or NHS body sponsored by my Department is listed in the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies 1993", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Road Accidents

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many children were killed or injured in road accidents in Scotland in 1992 and 1993.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* The requested information is given in the following table. The 1993 figures are provisional.

Child casualties (aged 0-15 years) in road accidents in Scotland by severity, 1992 and 1993.

Year	Fatal	Fatal and Serious	Total
1992	40	897	4,052
[1]1993	39	773	3,688

[1] Provisional

Bullying

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the incidence of bullying at primary and secondary schools in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* Because bullying can take many different forms, it would be impossible to estimate meaningfully the incidence over the country. All instances of bullying are, however, serious matters and, in the interests of all children, schools should address the issue, whether or not they perceive bullying as a problem in their own circumstances.

That is why the Government commissioned and issued copies of a pack entitled "Action Against Bullying" to all Scottish schools in 1992. The pack, which was drawn up by the Scottish Council for Research in Education, stresses that the simple most important thing a school can do to prevent bullying is to have a clear policy to which teachers, pupils and parents are committed.

The Government also funded the distribution to all Scottish schools in September 1993 of a follow-up pack, also produced by SCRE. This pack contains a school booklet aimed at non-teaching staff and a family booklet. Its focus is how to ensure that the whole school community works together.

The Scottish Office Education Department is also funding the appointment by SCRE of an anti-bullying development officer.

Student Grants

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his target for the percentage of adults returning to education and training; what plans he has to increase student grants to the level of the present grant plus the present student loan; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* My right hon. Friend has no specific target for adults returning to education and training, but he has endorsed the target set by the Advisory Scottish Council for Education and Training Targets which is that, by 1996, all employees should take part in training or development activities.

On student support, we announced last November that we would gradually adjust the relative amounts of grant and loan over the next few years with the aim of bringing the two elements into broad balance in 1996-97. We have no plans to change those arrangements.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to encourage more adults to enter further and higher education, with particular reference to the making of Scottish Office Environment Department grants to students taking courses on a part-time basis.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* More adults than ever before are entering further and higher education in Scotland and we are encouraging more part-time study. Our vocational qualifications reforms are stimulating wider access and progression. Education authorities have a discretionary power to make bursaries available to part-time students and I have no plans to change that.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Residential Homes, Down and Lisburn

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what is the role of the independent advocates who have been appointed by the Eastern health board in respect of residential homes in the Down and Lisburn unit of management;

(2) how many independent advocates have been appointed by the Eastern health and social services board in respect of residential homes in the Down and Lisburn unit of management;

(3) if he will list the names of the independent advocates who have been appointed by the Eastern health board in respect of residential homes in the Down and Lisburn unit of management.

Mr. Ancram: Prior to 1 April 1994, the Eastern health and social services board had not appointed independent advocates in the Down and Lisburn unit of management. Since 1 April the unit has been a health and social services trust and it has not yet taken any decision on the appointment of independent advocates.

Roads

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what financial amounts were allocated and spent on the maintenance of roads in each roads division since 1 April 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tim Smith: The information is as follows:

Expenditure in £'000's

Financial year	*Ballymena*	*Belfast*	*Coleraine*	*Craigavon*	*Downpatrick*	*Omagh*	*Total*
1980-81	5,497	5,270	5,385	6,501	5,435	6,758	34,846
1981-82	5,776	7,557	6,003	6,417	6,192	7,736	39,681
1982-83	5,603	5,888	4,845	7,266	6,191	7,200	36,993
1983-84	6,581	8,745	5,940	8,248	7,552	7,542	44,608
1984-85	6,863	8,362	5,768	10,336	8,915	8,845	49,089
1985-86	6,948	8,084	6,009	10,711	9,358	9,889	50,999
1986-87	6,194	8,471	6,027	7,969	8,819	8,370	45,850
1987-88	6,195	9,217	5,404	7,813	9,166	8,605	46,400
1988-89	6,275	9,583	6,261	8,477	9,298	9,541	49,435
1989-90	7,272	11,044	7,019	9,015	10,438	10,739	55,527
1990-91	7,792	11,142	7,734	10,259	10,903	12,101	59,931
1991-92	7,350	11,195	7,727	9,842	10,465	11,398	57,977
1992-93	7,815	10,993	8,065	10,162	10,345	12,513	59,893
[1]1993-94	7,368	11,198	7,834	10,255	10,411	13,194	60,260

[1] Provisional figures.

Housing

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many houses were constructed by the Housing Executive between 1 April 1984 and 31 March 1994; what were the locations of these developments; and, of these, how many are still in public ownership.

Mr. Tim Smith: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. I have been advised by the chief executive that information on the location of houses constructed between 1 April 1984 and 31 March 1994 is available by Housing Executive region and is as follows:—

Number of houses constructed

Region	*Number*
Belfast	8,254
North-East	1,079
North-West[1]	2,224
West[1]	1,518
South	1,314
South-East	3,543
TOTAL	17,932

[1] On 1 April 1990, Coleraine District transferred from North-West to North-East Region and the remainder of North-West Region amalgamated with West Region.

The number of these specific houses that are still in public ownership is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many houses have been constructed under the co-ownership housing scheme between 1 April 1984 and 31 March 1994; and what were the locations of these developments.

Mr. Tim Smith: The Northern Ireland Co-ownership Housing Association, which operates the co-ownership scheme, does not construct or commission the construction of houses. People interested in the scheme select the house they wish to purchase, either newly built or second hand, from the open market. Between 1 April 1984 and 31 March 1994 the association has purchased 8,976 houses, distributed as follows:

Council area	*New-build*	*Existing property*	*Total participants*
Derry	524	82	606
Limavady	91	32	123
Coleraine	275	111	386
Ballymoney	90	23	113
Moyle	40	7	47
Larne	65	39	104
Ballymena	131	16	147
Magherafelt	183	36	219
Cookstown	142	41	183
Strabane	95	17	112
Omagh	161	18	179
Fermanagh	157	19	176
Dungannon	125	7	132
Craigavon	524	133	657
Armagh	110	17	127
Newry and Mourne	274	51	325
Banbridge	121	37	158
Down	303	87	390
Lisburn	587	299	886
Antrim	186	55	241
Newtownabbey	310	200	510
Carrickfergus	270	100	370
North Down	653	382	1,035
Newtownards	276	134	410
Castlereagh	297	105	402
Belfast	471	467	938
TOTAL	6,461	2,515	8,976

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how much was allocated to each regional division of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in each year from 1 April 1984 to 31 March 1994;

(2) how much has been allocated to each regional division of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in the 1993-94 financial year; and how much is to be allocated to each district office in the 1994-95 financial year.

Mr. Ancram: These are matters for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. I am advised by its chief executive that the information is not available in the form requested. Expenditure by region for the years requested over the main expenditure blocks was as follows:—

Expenditure by regional division (£ million)[1]

Year	North East	South East	West[3]	South	Belfast
1984-85	41·251	42·710	62·949	35·242	109·587
1985-86	37·130	45·546	66·075	38·301	112·928
1986-87	35·905	47·694	62·313	33·957	95·482
1987-88	39·097	44·507	60·102	34·678	95·770
1988-89	41·641	49·095	62·764	36·269	89·789
1989-90	44·415	51·355	63·349	35·795	82·017
1990-91[2]	44·275	46·524	64·131	37·536	77·315
1991-92[2]	53·409	51·659	58·044	36·328	74·575
1992-93[2]	54·724	50·885	62·437	37·592	77·631
1993-94[2]	56·940	51·678	69·001	42·028	69·891
TOTAL	448·787	481·653	631·165	367·726	884·985

[1] Comprises expenditure on new housebuilding, land and property acquisition, improvement work, office accommodation and equipment, maintenance, supervision and management and grants to the private sector. Loan charges, headquarters administration and other costs not allocated to the regions are excluded.

[2] Includes figures for miscellaneous expenditure, such as insurance and write-offs, which are only available by Region from 1990-91.

[3] The figures for West region include those for the former North West region which was subsumed on 1 April 1991, with the exception of the Coleraine district which transferred to the North East region.

Information on the allocations to district offices for 1994-95 is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many houses have been constructed by housing associations between 1 April 1984 and 31 March 1994; and what were the locations of these developments.

Mr. Tim Smith: Between 1 April 1984 and 31 March 1994, registered housing associations in Northern Ireland completed 6,599 new-build houses, flats and bungalows. This figure includes 30 hostels for special needs groups, each recorded as a single dwelling and 108 sheltered dwellings built by the Housing Executive but transferred on completion to housing associations.

A schedule of the 314 locations of these developments has been placed in the Library.

Education Reforms

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost of introducing educational reforms under the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 between 1 April 1990 and 31 March 1994.

Mr. Ancram: From April 1990 to April 1994 some £136 million additional resources have been made available for the implementation of the reform programme. These resources have been applied, on top of targeted baseline provision, to a number of areas, in broad terms the main ones being curriculum development, assessment and support—£67 million—the introduction of local management of schools and colleges—£16 million—and the accommodation and equipment needs of schools—£50 million. It is not, however, possible to identify expenditure due solely to the changes introduced in the 1989 Order.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost of introducing assessment arrangements as part of the education reforms for *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94.

Mr. Ancram: The cost of introducing assessment arrangements as part of education reform is £2·50 million in 1992-93 and £2·63 million in 1993-94. These figures do not include in-service training costs incurred by education and library boards; this information is not held centrally.

Orthopaedic Operations

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are on the waiting list for orthopaedic operations; how long they have been on the waiting list; and what is the expected date for their operation.

Mr. Ancram: The number of people and the length of time for which they have been waiting for treatment in the trauma and orthopaedic speciality at 31 December 1993, the latest date for which information is available, is set out in the table:

Waiting times (months)	Ordinary Admissions	Day Cases	Total
0-2	847	215	1,062
3-5	564	165	729
6-8	501	115	616
9-11	374	69	443
12-14	242	63	305
15-17	211	61	272
18-20	134	45	179
21-23	139	23	162
24+	178	9	187
Totals	3,190	765	3,955

With regard to the final part of the question about expected dates for the above patients' operations, this information is not held centrally.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what financial amounts have been allocated to orthopaedic surgery in Northern Ireland from 1 April 1980 to 31 March 1994 under *(a)* PARR and *(b)* capitation funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: None. Capitation funding, like its predecessor PARR, is not a mechanism for distributing resources for specific services. It is a means of allocating total revenue resources to the four health and social services boards which, in the light of perceived need, other competing service demands and the amount of resources available, then determine the amount to spend on specific services such as orthopaedic.

Information about the amount spent on orthopaedic surgery in Northern Ireland from 1 April 1980 to 31 March 1994 is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Asthma

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his policy in respect of community care grants and loans from the social fund for specialised furnishings for those who suffer from asthma; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: Every application for a grant or loan from the social fund is decided on its merits. There are no special arrangements for sufferers from asthma or any other illness.

Arthur Andersen

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on progress in the Department's civil action against Arthur Andersen in the New York courts.

Mr. Tim Smith: The Department continues to pursue its civil action against Arthur Andersen and Co., former auditors of De Lorean Motor Cars Ltd. No date has been set yet for the trial, but it is expected that the pre-trial procedures should be completed by September 1994.

Deer (Tuberculosis)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list, by region, the number of cases of tuberculosis in deer in each year since 1985.

Mr. Ancram: In Northern Ireland bovine tuberculosis has been detected in deer in one case in 1991 and four cases in 1992.

School Leavers

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what new measures he will introduce to reduce the number of school leavers with no qualifications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The proportion of Northern Ireland school leavers with no qualifications has fallen steadily from a figure of 17·7 per cent. in 1986-87 to 7·4 per cent. in 1991-92. Pupils potentially in this category will continue to benefit from a range of education reform initiatives and from additional resources allocated through the targeting social needs policy and making Belfast work initiative. Consideration is also being given to targeting selected schools undertaking development plans to address the problem of under-achievement.

Economic Development

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will ensure that a comprehensive review and progress report is issued annually covering all agencies involved in economic development and their activities, following the economic assessment by the Northern Ireland Economic Council.

Mr. Tim Smith: I am considering the Northern Ireland Economic Council's recommendation. Before deciding, I need to be sure that such a document would bring benefits over and above the considerable amount of material already published in the agencies' own annual reports.

Tree Planting

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the present policy of the Forest Service Department of Agriculture, Northern Ireland in respect of planting in proximity to public roads.

Mr. Ancram: The general policy of the Forest Service is to keep planting back 10 to 20 m from the edge of a public road. The average distance would be about 15 m.

Sea Fish Licence Tribunal

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what arrangements are in place for the setting up of appeals tribunals under the Sea Fisheries (Conservation) Act 1992; and how many departmental officials and staff were engaged in work related to the setting up of these tribunals on 1 April.

Mr. Ancram: Work on the sea fish licence tribunal has been suspended, and no staff were engaged on this work on 1 April 1994.

Fish Conservation

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on how many occasions since the decision in December 1993 to suspend the operation of the Sea Fisheries (Conservation) Act 1992 pending a decision of the European Court of Justice he or other Ministers have met representatives of the Northern Ireland fishing industry to discuss alternative conservation strategies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: My noble Friend has met representatives of the Northern Ireland Fishing Industry on two occasions since 14 December 1993. The National Federation of Fishermen's Organisation's technical conservation proposals included input from the Northern Ireland fishing industry. Officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland met the NFFO and representatives of the Northern Ireland industry on 8 March to examine their proposals in detail.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what expenditure has been incurred by his Department *(a)* up to 31 December 1993 and *(b)* since 1 January 1994 in making preparations, including the purchase of equipment, for the implementation of the Sea Fisheries (Conservation) Act 1992.

Mr. Ancram: The estimated cost for Northern Ireland of preparing for the introduction of fisherman's days at sea restrictions is £76,500 up to 31 December 1993. No equipment was purchased. No costs have been incurred since 1 January 1994 on such preparations.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what amount of computer hardware and software has been purchased by his Department for the purposes or implementing the provisions of the Sea Fisheries (Conservation) Act 1992.

Mr. Ancram: None.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many officials of his Department

were engaged in work related to the implementation of the Sea Fisheries (Conservation) Act 1992 on 31 December 1993; and how many officials continue to be engaged in work related to the implementation of this Act.

Mr. Ancram: At the beginning of December 1993 four officials were responsible for assessing fishermen's representations against their provisional days at sea allocations; they have all been redeployed.

Privatisation (Consultants)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will estimate the cost of employing consultants in connection with privatisation programmes in which his Department has been engaged since 1980.

Sir John Wheeler: The information requested is not available in the Northern Ireland Office nor in all of the Northern Ireland Departments prior to 1989. However, from April 1989 to March 1994 the cost of employing consultants in connection with privatisation programmes in the Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Departments was £13·4 million.

Military Complaints

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he intends to lay before Parliament Mr. David Hewitt's annual report as independent assessor of military complaints procedures.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have today arranged for David Hewitt's first annual report as independent assessor of military complaints procedures to be laid before each House of Parliament. I welcome this thorough report, which represents a comprehensive examination of the complaints procedures which the Army now have in place in Northern Ireland.

I particularly welcome Mr. Hewitt's comment that

"I would be fairly certain that no other armed force in the world has quite as detailed complaints procedures as those devised for military personnel in Northern Ireland".

This illustrates the importance which the Army attaches to its relations with the community in Northern Ireland.

There may, of course, be scope for yet further improvement to the procedures and I look forward to hearing the views of the General Officer Commanding Northern Ireland on Mr. Hewitt's comments, questions and recommendations.

The Government fully recognise that the emergency legislation provides the armed forces with additional powers, vital in countering the terrorist campaign, although it gives them no privileges. These powers must be exercised with sensitivity and due regard to the rights of individuals, as the Army's authorities have satisfied Mr. Hewitt that they themselves recognise. The independent assessor provides valuable assistance in ensuring that, where the highest standards are not met, appropriate and effective procedures are in place to enable and help the individual in seeking redress.

I am most grateful to Mr. Hewitt for his work throughout the past year. His report will receive careful and detailed consideration.

Social Security Agency

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what performance targets have been set for the Social Security Agency for the current financial year.

Mr. Ancram: The targets are included in the agency's 1994-95 business plan, which was published today. A copy of the plan will be placed in the Library. The targets are in line with the Government's policy of improving the service provided to customers and fully support the standards established in the Northern Ireland citizens charter. I am satisfied that the targets present a demanding challenge for the agency. They are as follows:

1. *Benefit Clearance Times*[1]
Social Fund Crisis Loans
on the day need arises[2]
Social Fund Community Grants
65 per cent. in 7 days
95 per cent. in 20 days
Income Support
71 per cent. in 5 days
90 per cent. in 13 days
Sickness/Invalidity Benefit
65 per cent. in 10 days
95 per cent. in 30 days
Child Benefit
73 per cent. in 10 days
95 per cent. in 30 days
Family Credit
60 per cent. in 13 days
95 per cent. in 42 days
Disability Living Allowance
68 per cent. in 30 days
85 per cent. in 53 days
Retirement Pension
65 per cent. in 20 days
95 per cent. in 60 days
Unemployment Benefit
6·5 days
2. *Benefit Accuracy*
Income Support
to pay the correct amount in at least 92 per cent. of cases
Sickness/Invalidity Benefit
to pay the correct amount in at least 97 per cent. of cases
Child Benefit
to pay the correct amount in at least 98 per cent. of cases
Family Credit
to pay the correct amount in at least 93 per cent. of cases
Disability Living allowance
to pay the correct amount in at least 98 per cent. of cases
Retirement Pension
to pay the correct amount in at least 99 per cent. of cases
Unemployment Benefit
to pay the correct amount in at least 96·5 per cent. of cases
3. *Customer Satisfaction*
90 per cent. of customers to regard the Agency' service as satisfactory or better
4. *Financial Recovery*
recovery of Social Fund loans—£17·24 million
recovery of Income Support overpayments—£1·40 million
recovery of centralised benefits overpayments—£0·40 million
benefit savings from detection and prevention of fraud—£11·50 million
to carry out 5,100 National Insurance contributions surveys (including 1,020 employer educational visits)
identify £1·10 million Class 1 arrears as a result of compliance work
5. *Resource Management*
to live within a gross allocation of £29·80 million for Social Fund loans and community care grants
to live within the Agency's gross administration budget of £130·0 million, of which £126·5 million relates to running costs
to achieve cash efficiency savings of the order of £3·0 million

Notes:

1. In all cases, clearance time is measured from the date of receipt of a claim or application in the office to the date on which the claim or application is decided. The measure, therefore, excludes the time taken to issue notification of the decision and any payment.
2. Monitored against '95 per cent. in 1 day'.

Security Firms

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many private security firms have been employed by his Department for each of the last 10 years; what has been the annual value of the contracts; and if he will estimate how many guards have been employed for each of those years.

Sir John Wheeler: Details of private security firms employed by the Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Departments over the period 1991-92 to 1993-94 are as follows:

	Number of firms	*Annual value £000s*	*Number of guards*
1991-92	15	1,796·7	183
1992-93	18	2,050·6	163
1993-94	18	1,946·8	173

For the details of all contracts for each financial year from 1984-85 to 1990-91, I refer the hon. Member to the reply he was given on 22 October 1991, *Official Report*, column 552.

EDUCATION

Grant-maintained Schools

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total number of *(a)* parents eligible to vote, *(b)* parents who have voted in favour of seeking grant-maintained status and *(c)* parents who have voted against seeking grant-maintained status in all the ballots so far held on grant-maintained status.

Mr. Robin Squire: In ballots on grant-maintained status held so far, 1,324,995 parents were eligible to vote: 544,170 parents voted in favour, and 306,296 parents voted against.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary pupils within each local education authority area are being educated in grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: The following table shows the estimated percentages of pupils at maintained primary and secondary schools who are currently being educated in grant-maintained schools within each local education authority area in England.

Estimated percentages of pupils educated in grant-maintained schools in each LEA area

LEA	*Primary Per cent.*	*Secondary Per cent.*
Avon	0·0	2·9
Barking	0·0	0·0
Barnet	3·3	53·4
Barnsley	0·0	0·0
Bedfordshire	1·5	19·6
Berkshire	3·7	16·0
Bexley	3·5	24·9
Birmingham	1·6	23·0
Bolton	1·3	16·6
Bradford	1·3	11·1
Brent	4·5	75·7
Bromley	5·6	68·0
Buckinghamshire	3·5	27·3
Bury	1·3	0·0
Calderdale	3·3	48·3
Cambridgeshire	3·3	37·5
Camden	0·0	22·3
Cheshire	0·5	3·8
Cleveland	0·0	0·0
Cornwall	0·0	0·0
Corporation of London	0·0	0·0
Coventry	0·0	0·0
Croydon	3·2	40·5
Cumbria	5·5	34·6
Derbyshire	2·0	26·8
Devon	0·4	8·0
Doncaster	0·0	0·0
Dorset	0·9	23·6
Dudley	1·4	25·4
Durham	0·0	0·0
Ealing	4·4	44·6
East Sussex	0·0	0·0
Enfield	0·6	32·1
Essex	15·4	69·7
Gateshead	0·0	0·0
Gloucestershire	6·6	66·2
Greenwich	1·1	0·0
Hackney	0·5	0·0
Hammersmith	0·0	20·6
Hampshire	3·0	20·7
Haringey	0·0	0·0
Harrow	0·0	6·1
Havering	0·0	25·7
Hereford and Worcester	0·0	7·6
Hertfordshire	1·9	30·7
Hillingdon	13·3	83·6
Hounslow	0·0	15·0
Humberside	0·3	0·0
Isle of Wight	0·0	0·0
Isles of Scilly	0·0	0·0
Islington	0·0	0·0
Kensington and Chelsea	8·4	19·6
Kent	3·9	50·8
Kingston upon Thames	1·8	37·6
Kirklees	0·0	5·1
Knowsley	0·0	8·0
Lambeth	6·6	53·0
Lancashire	0·4	8·0
Leeds	0·1	2·6
Leicestershire	0·0	5·5
Lewisham	1·8	0·0
Lincolnshire	12·7	44·2
Liverpool	0·0	7·6
Manchester	0·0	0·0
Merton	0·0	0·0
Newcastle upon Tyne	0·0	0·0
Newham	0·0	4·1
Norfolk	4·2	21·4
North Tyneside	0·0	1·5
North Yorkshire	0·0	0·0
Northamptonshire	6·1	20·7
Northumberland	0·0	2·2
Nottinghamshire	0·0	2·9
Oldham	0·0	0·0
Oxfordshire	0·2	0·0
Redbridge	0·0	7·4
Richmond upon Thames	0·0	0·0
Rochdale	5·2	8·3
Rotherham	0·0	0·0
Salford	0·0	3·6
Sandwell	0·0	3·7
Sefton	0·0	0·0

LEA	Primary Per cent.	Secondary Per cent.
Sheffield	2·2	7·1
Shropshire	0·9	14·3
Solihull	2·3	0·0
Somerset	1·1	1·4
South Tyneside	0·0	0·0
Southwark	6·0	30·3
St. Helens	0·0	0·0
Staffordshire	0·1	6·3
Stockport	0·0	0·0
Suffolk	0·0	0·0
Sunderland	0·0	0·0
Surrey	4·2	25·5
Sutton	6·2	59·6
Tameside	0·0	18·1
Tower Hamlets	0·0	7·8
Trafford	0·0	25·4
Wakefield	0·0	0·0
Walsall	2·0	29·0
Waltham Forest	0·0	17·3
Wandsworth	3·0	72·8
Warwickshire	0·0	18·9
West Sussex	0·0	0·0
Westminster	0·0	0·0
Wigan	0·0	0·0
Wiltshire	6·2	39·2
Wirral	0·0	9·8
Wolverhampton	0·0	14·9

Note

Percentages based on DFE January 1993 Schools Census, including all pupils in maintained primary and secondary schools, except part-time pupils in grant-maintained schools.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the closing date of the ballot for each of the schools which became grant-maintained on 1 April; on what date the proposals were published; and on what date his approval was notified to *(a)* the school and *(b)* the local education authority.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is set out in the table:

Schools incorporated as grant-maintained on 1 April 1994

School	Ballot closed	Proposals published	[1]Approval
All Saints' CE Primary School	28 June 1993	30 August 1993	11 January 1994
Askam Primary School	14 May 1993	18 June 1993	7 December 1993
Bishop Wordsworth's Grammar School	21 September 1993	21 October 1993	2 March 1994
Brighouse High School	20 December 1993	30 December 1993	25 March 1994
Burstow Primary School (GM)	14 July 1993	14 September 1993	20 December 1993
Caldew School	24 December 1993	30 December 1993	30 March 1994
Charlton Kings GM Infants' School	12 July 1993	6 October 1993	17 January 1994
Charlton Kings Grant-Maintained Junior School	17 May 1993	22 June 1993	10 November 1993
Chase Lane Primary Grant-Maintained School	30 June 1993	23 July 1993	14 January 1994
Collingwood Primary School	19 July 1993	1 October 1993	31 January 1994
Colmers Farm Grant-Maintained School	14 July 1993	18 November 1993	1 March 1994
Colonna Convent Girls' School	14 May 1993	23 June 1993	10 December 1993
Coulsdon High School (formerly Taunton Manor)	10 June 1993	30 July 1993	10 November 1993
Cuffley Primary School	7 July 1993	6 August 1993	10 December 1993
Dane Court Grammar School	8 November 1993	26 November 1993	18 March 1994
Dearham Grant-Maintained Primary School	26 May 1993	22 September 1993	14 December 1993
Dover Grammar School for Boys	23 June 1993	8 November 1993	9 March 1994
Flookburgh (CE GM) Primary School	9 June 1993	30 June 1993	27 September 1993
Foxhill First School	18 August 1993	11 October 1993	25 January 1994
Frogwell Primary School (GM)	9 June 1993	16 September 1993	15 December 1993
Gilsland CE Primary School (GM)	5 July 1993	15 December 1993	30 March 1994
Great Marlow School (GM)	7 June 1993	1 November 1993	1 February 1994
Grimoldby Grant-Maintained Primary School	9 June 1993	21 July 1993	29 November 1993
Hallbankgate (Grant-Maintained Primary School)	24 November 1993	30 November 1993	30 March 1994
Hardenhuish School	25 June 1993	1 December 1993	17 March 1994
Hartsholme Primary Grant-Maintained School	20 March 1993	1 July 1993	26 November 1993
Hasmonean High School	7 July 1993	31 August 1993	22 March 1994
Hawksmoor Primary School	18 March 1993	4 May 1993	28 March 1994
Heversham CE Primary School	28 June 1993	22 October 1993	23 February 1994
Heybridge Primary School (GM)	25 June 1993	1 October 1993	14 December 1993
Heywood School (GM)	1 December 1993	2 December 1993	3 March 1994
Hipperholme and Lightcliffe High School	14 June 1993	16 August 1993	15 December 1993
Hockley Primary School (GM)	4 June 1993	15 July 1993	23 December 1993
Holy Rood Junior School	17 December 1993	21 December 1993	17 March 1993
Horton Kirby CE Primary School	30 June 1993	13 September 1993	23 December 1993
Hurstmere School	8 December 1993	14 December 1993	21 March 1994
Ireleth St. Peter's CE GM Primary School	28 June 1993	27 September 1993	31 January 1994
John Kelly Boys' Community School (GM)	12 November 1993	17 December 1993	17 March 1994
John Kelly Girls' School	12 November 1993	13 December 1993	17 March 1994
Kennal Technology College	27 October 1993	1 November 1993	17 February 1994
Kenningtons Grant-Maintained Primary School	25 February 1993	23 July 1993	9 February 1994
Lawford CE Primary School (GM)	14 June 1993	31 July 1993	20 December 1993
Little Heath Primary School	21 October 1993	19 November 1993	7 March 1994
Maidenhill School	10 May 1993	5 November 193	23 February 1994
Malorees Junior School	3 December 1993	23 December 1993	30 March 1994
Manor Park (Grant-Maintained) Primary School	28 October 1993	18 November 1993	15 February 1994
Matravers School (GM)	28 June 1993	20 September 1993	28 March 1994
Mersea Island School	3 December 1993	17 December 1993	29 March 1994
Nettleham Infants Grant-Maintained School	29 November 1993	15 December 1993	24 March 1994
Norbury Manor High School for Girls	15 December 1993	20 December 1993	14 March 1994
North West London Jewish Day School	22 November 1993	24 November 1993	23 March 1994

School	Ballot closed	Proposals published	[1]Approval
Northaw CE Primary School	19 July 1993	18 October 1993	17 March 1994
Northmead School, Guildford (GM Junior)	25 June 1993	8 October 1993	18 March 1994
Our Lady of Hartley RC Primary School	25 October 1993	16 November 1993	22 March 1994
Our Lady of Victories Grant-Maintained School	7 July 1993	4 October 1993	3 February 1994
Park Mead Grant Maintained Junior School	22 November 1993	24 November 1993	8 March 1994
Pascroft Primary School	11 June 1993	14 September 1993	14 March 1994
Peat Valley School	26 March 1993	28 September 1993	1 March 1994
Poole Grammar School	22 October 1993	26 October 1993	1 March 1994
Primrose Hill CE GM Primary School	22 December 1993	23 December 1993	17 March 1994
Prince Avenue Primary School (GM)	25 October 1993	17 November 1993	14 February 1994
Queen Elizabeth School	31 May 1993	13 October 1993	10 February 1994
R. A. Butler Infant School (Grant-Maintained)	18 October 1993	12 November 1993	27 January 1994
R. A. Butler Junior School (Grant-Maintained)	18 October 1993	12 November 1993	27 January 1994
Rolleshy First School (Grant-Maintained)	28 May 1993	25 June 1993	9 December 1993
Russell Hall First School	21 July 1993	1 October 1993	25 January 1994
Shenfield High School	1 November 1993	22 November 1993	18 February 1994
St. Anne's Convent School	20 December 1993	22 December 1993	25 March 1994
St. Benedict's College	9 July 1993	4 November 1993	10 February 1994
St. Bernard's High School	29 March 1993	23 July 1993	25 January 1994
St. Clement Danes Grant-Maintained School	7 June 1993	1 September 1993	24 March 1994
St. Francis CE Junior and Infant School	17 May 1993	16 November 1993	18 February 1994
St. George's RC GM Primary School	28 June 1993	6 October 1993	2 February 1994
St. Helen's RC Infant School (Grant-Maintained)	25 May 1993	19 July 1993	11 February 1994
St. Helen's RC Junior School (Grant-Maintained)	26 May 1993	19 July 1993	6 December 1993
St. John Fisher RC GM Primary School	28 June 1993	30 September 1993	22 March 1994
St. John's CE Primary School, Clifton (GM)	15 November 1993	10 December 1993	18 March 1994
St. John's RC GM Comprehensive School	25 October 1993	6 December 1993	18 March 1994
St. John's CE Primary School	21 April 1993	30 June 1993	21 October 1993
St. Mary's Catholic Grant-Maintained School	29 November 1993	11 January 1994	22 March 1994
St. Mary's RC Primary School	7 June 1993	4 October 1993	24 January 1994
St. Mary's RC Primary School (Grant-Maintained)	23 June 1993	1 December 1993	23 March 1994
St. Michael and All Angels CE GM Primary School	5 April 1993	30 September 1993	29 March 1994
St. Michael's CE Primary School	22 September 1993	30 November 1993	18 March 1994
St. Mildred's GM CE Primary School, Whiston	25 September 1992	24 February 1993	11 January 1994
St. Patrick's RC Primary School	30 June 1993	27 September 1993	28 March 1994
St. Peter's CE Grant Maintained School	28 May 1993	22 July 1993	8 March 1994
St. Theresa's RC Primary School	25 May 1993	27 October 1993	28 March 1994
St. Thomas's of Canterbury RC Primary School	10 March 1993	6 August 1993	10 December 1993
St. Thomas's CE Primary School	27 October 1992	8 October 1993	24 March 1994
Stella Maris RC Primary School	22 June 1993	5 October 1993	20 January 1994
The Alderman Blaxill School	29 January 1993	23 July 1993	18 January 1994
The Billericay School	8 November 1993	25 November 1993	7 March 1994
The British Grant-Maintained Primary School	28 June 1993	22 November 1993	2 March 1994
The Hertfordshire and Essex High School	21 September 1993	4 October 1993	21 March 1994
The Howard School (Grant-Maintained)	9 April 1993	8 October 1993	18 February 1994
The Sandon School	16 June 1993	26 August 1993	10 January 1994
The Thomas Willingale Grant-Maintained School	12 July 1993	21 October 1993	14 February 1994
The Walmley Grant Maintained Junior School	10 May 1993	18 June 1993	6 September 1993
The Wroxham School (G.M.)	2 July 1993	9 September 1993	9 February 1994
Thorpedene Grant-Maintained Junior School	12 April 1993	17 June 1993	13 September 1993
Tirlebrook Primary School	7 July 1993	27 September 1993	26 January 1994
Upshire Grant-Maintained Primary School	13 October 1993	10 December 1993	18 March 1994
Walmley Infant Grant-Maintained School	10 May 1993	18 June 1993	6 September 1993
Walton Grant-Maintained Primary School	11 June 1993	1 October 1993	11 January 1994
Warden Hill Grant-Maintained Primary School	23 November 1993	1 December 1993	22 March 1994
Wellfield Middle School (Grant-Maintained)	19 March 1993	30 June 1993	31 March 1994
Whitecross School (Grant-Maintained)	29 November 1993	17 December 1993	25 March 1994
William Howard School	24 November 1993	3 December 1993	22 March 1994
Wingfield CE Primary School	21 July 1993	19 November 1993	15 March 1994
Winterton First School (Grant-Maintained)	11 June 1993	25 June 1993	18 November 1993
Wyburns Primary School (Grant-Maintained)	2 July 1993	18 October 1993	26 January 1994

[1] The approval date shown is the date at which the school was notified. In most cases the local education authority would have been informed on the same day. In some cases schools were given earlier notification that the Secretary of State was minded to approve the proposals subject to certain modifications.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the grant-maintained schools that have a policy of admitting the children of their teachers irrespective of those children meeting the other admission criteria.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is not collected centrally. Circular 6/93—"Admissions to Maintained Schools"—notes that the admission arrangements of a school may provide that, if it is over-subscribed, priority will be given to children whose parents work at the school. This applies to schools maintained by LEAs, including voluntary aided schools, as well as to grant-maintained schools.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) which grant-maintained schools received details of their final annual maintenance grants for 1994-95

and on what date; and, for each, what is the level of *(a)* direct AMG, *(b)* central AMG and *(c)* the value of *(b)* as a percentage of *(a)*;

(2) which grant-maintained schools have not received notification of their final annual maintenance grants.

Mr. Robin Squire: The calculation and notification of annual maintenance grant to grant-maintained schools are now the responsibility of the Funding Agency for Schools. I have asked the chairman of the Funding Agency to reply to the hon. Member.

Technology Colleges

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what bids were submitted for initial capital grant for each of the 13 schools listed in his announcement of 26 April; what allocations have been made; and what level and nature of additional annual funding has been agreed.

Mr. Robin Squire: The schools listed in the announcement have been invited to submit a bid for a capital project which involves a capital grant of up to £100,000. Accordingly, no allocations have yet been made. Additional annual funding for each of the schools in financial year 1994-95 will be at the rate of £60 per pupil, for the purposes of support, equipment and training for the teaching of technology, science and mathematics.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much of each sponsor's contribution for each of the 13 schools listed in his announcement of 26 April, is in the form of *(a)* cash, *(b)* goods and *(c)* services; and whether the value of each of *(b)* and *(c)* is based on the retail or normal commercial value or the cost to the sponsor.

Mr. Robin Squire: The value and nature of sponsorship pledged by the main sponsors for each of the 13 technology colleges is listed in the table. Information on the retail or normal commercial value of goods and services and the cost to the sponsor is commercially confidential.

School/sponsor	*Value £000s*	*Nature of sponsorship*
Applemore Technology School		
The Garfield Weston Foundation	50	cash
2GL	10	goods
Clifton Red Consultants	20	goods
International Speciality Chemicals	10	cash
Vosper Thornycroft (UK)	10	cash
Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School		
The Stanley Kalms Foundation	50	cash
Systems Integrated Research	15	cash and goods
Testometric	10	goods
Greenwood Coope Ltd	10	cash
Unilab	5	cash
Denefield School		
DHL Worldwide Express	65	cash and goods
Database and Apricot Computers	20	cash and goods
Thames Water PLC	13	cash and goods
John Kelly Boys Community School		
The Bestway Group	60	cash
Unisys	40	goods and services
John Kelly Girls Community School		
The Bestway Group	60	cash
Unisys	40	goods and services
Lancaster Royal Grammar School		
Fairfield Catering Company Ltd	15	cash
Clifton Reed Consultants	5	cash
LRGS Endowment Trustees	100	cash
Mill Hill County High School		
The Garfield Weston Foundation	50	cash
Database and Apricot Computers	20	cash and goods
Chartwells	25	cash
Thorpe Furniture	5	cash
The Philip Morant School		
The Garfield Weston Foundation	50	cash
Research Machines	24	cash and goods
Architects Joint Partnership	5	cash
Woods of Colchester	1·5	cash
Midland Bank	1·5	cash
Rastrick High School		
The Stanley Kalms Foundation	50	cash
Denford Machine Tools	40	goods
Clifton Reed Consultants	5	cash
Fine Arts Productions	2·5	cash
Concept Merchandising	1	cash
Ravens Wood School for Boys		
ICL	33	cash and goods
NYNEX Cablecomms	2·5	cash
SIR (software)	6·5	goods
Diamik	6·5	goods
The Wellcome Foundation Ltd	2·5	cash
Parent/Teacher Association	24	cash
Sale Moor School		
The Alliance Family Foundation	100	cash
Senacre Technology School		
Research Machines	26·5	goods
Mikrodaisy International	13	goods
Active Images	20	goods
RICOH	12	goods
Russell and Brand	4	cash
Charles Walter Ltd	6·5	cash
Architects Joint Partnership	6·5	cash
Small Heath School		
Garfield Weston Foundation	50	cash
W. Canning Charitable Trust	6	cash
GTI Educational Systems	16·5	cash
Rialtech Ltd	12·5	cash

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his estimate of the number of surplus places in each city technology college.

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member on 14 March 1994, *Official Report*, column *530*. Recruitment at age 11 is over-subscribed for all city technology colleges, and we expect them all to be full to capacity once the build-up phase is complete. It makes no sense to describe the position therefore as involving surplus places.

Nursery Education

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his written answer of 18 April, *Official Report*, column *379*, concerning the number of children attending pre-school activities, if he will *(a)* estimate the numbers attending more than one category of

provision and *(b)* those attending pre-school playgroups with members of the Pre-school Playgroups Association, in (i) 1993 and (ii) 1994.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department does not collect information on how many children attend more than one form of pre-school provision in the course of a year, but the proportion is thought to be relatively small. I am informed by the Pre-School Playgroups Association that as at Janaury 1993 there were 771,397 children attending playgroups in membership of the Association. Data are not yet available for 1994, but the Association estimates that the total number of children attending member playgroups will be very close to the 1993 total.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he has taken to establish, or estimate, the level of parental demand for nursery education in all or part of *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales.

Mr. Robin Squire: Evidence from a variety of sources suggests that most parents want some form of provision before age five, and that many wish to have a choice of provision besides state nursery education. Nursery education in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Privatisation (Consultants)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will estimate the cost of employing consultants in connection with privatisation programmes in which his Department has been engaged since 1980.

Mr. Boswell: The value of consultancy contracts awarded by the Department in relation to privatisation programmes since 1980 is £627,000.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 5 May 1994

DEFENCE

Homosexual Service Personnel

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were discharged from (i) the Royal Navy, (ii) the Army and (iii) the Royal Air Force in (A) 1992, (B) 1993 and (C) 1994 because they were homosexual; and in each case what proportion this was of the total discharged and what proportion of the total employed;

(2) in which rank were each of the people discharged from *(a)* the Royal Navy, *(b)* the Army and *(c)* the Royal Air Force because they were homosexual in each of the last five years.

Mr. Hanley: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Search and Rescue

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the military search and rescue missions flown from RAF Brawdy and RAF Valley between 0001 hours and 2350 hours on Tuesday 19 April including time of call and time of arrival on scene.

Mr. Hanley: Neither the search and rescue helicopter flight at RAF Brawdy nor that at RAF Valley was called out on any military search and rescue missions on the day in question.

Oil and Gas Exploration

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in what way his Department's operations in the Irish sea require drilling for oil and gas to be postponed until 1996-97; and what effect this has on military installations in Wales.

Mr. Hanley: My Department has requested that oil and gas exploration in a small number of MOD ranges and exercise areas in the Irish sea be delayed until 1996-97 to enable defence activities to be rescheduled. It is too early to say what impact any subsequent exploitation activities may have on defence installations in Wales.

Services Review

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is yet in a position to give details of the full team which will conduct the independent review of service career and manpower structures and terms and conditions of service.

Mr. Hanley: Further to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) on 30 March, *Official Report*, columns *752-53*, which announced the appointment of Mr. Michael Bett, a former deputy chairman of British Telecom plc, to lead the independent team conducting this review, my right hon. and learned Friend has decided to appoint the following as team members: Mr. Anthony Vineall, who has had a career as a senior personnel executive with Unilever plc; Mr. Michael Garner, who was recently a director of TI Group plc; and Admiral Sir John Kerr, who retires shortly from the Royal Navy.

TREASURY

Orimulsion

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if it is his policy under article 3(3) of directive 92/12/EEC to apply excise duty to orimulsion for electricity generation; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if it is his policy to levy excise duty on orimulsion for electricity generation at the same rate as heavy fuel oil;

(3) when he expects to lay regulations to apply excise duty to orimulsion.

Sir John Cope: Provision was made in the Finance Act 1993 to levy an excise duty on products falling within harmonised system heading 27.15. Following the recent decision of the harmonised systems committee of the Customs Co-operation Council, orimulsion no longer falls within this heading and no regulations will therefore be laid concerning it. We have no plans to use the provisions of article 3(3) of directive 92/12/EEC to impose excise duty on orimulsion.

Foreshore and Seabed Leases

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what directions he has given to the Crown Estate Commissioners under section 1(4) of the Crown Estate Act 1961 as to the charging of rents for the lease of foreshore and seabed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 4 May 1994]:* I have given no directions.

Taxpayers

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many taxpayers paid as a maximum each rate of tax, including those paying no tax at all, for each year since 1970; and what percentage of total taxpayers each number represents.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 20 April 1994]:* Available information on income tax payers is given in the table. Estimates of taxpayers by marginal rate are not available for years prior to 1973-74.

Taxpayers[1] by marginal rate: Numbers

(thousands)

Marginal rate[2]	*1973-74*	*1974-75*	*1975-76*	*1976-77*	*1977-78*	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*
20	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
25	—	—	—	—	—	3,120	2,670	—	—	—	—
30	19,300	—	—	—	—	—	18,300	20,200	19,700	19,800	19,400
33	—	19,600	—	—	—	17,500	—	—	—	—	—
34	—	—	19,500	—	19,600	—	—	—	—	—	—
35	—	—	—	19,800	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
38	—	175	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
40	114	—	324	338	374	235	302	334	445	435	355
43	—	200	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
45	70	—	378	444	221	158	168	216	305	245	245
48	—	96	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
50	44	—	161	194	110	86	108	129	170	155	140
53	—	72	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
55	56	—	99	106	71	84	43	52	75	65	55
58	—	74	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
60	33	—	115	103	95	54	53	65	95	83	65
63	—	44	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
65	28	—	58	76	51	45	—	—	—	—	—
68	—	36	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
70	19	—	48	57	30	32	—	—	—	—	—
73	—	25	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
75	18	—	34	42	41	36	—	—	—	—	—
83	—	26	29	36	41	33	—	—	—	—	—
Total	19,700	20,400	20,800	21,200	20,600	21,400	21,600	21,000	20,800	20,800	20,300

[1] Single people are married couples for years up to and including 1989-90; individuals from 1990-91.
[2] Tax rate applicable to earned income. This excludes any liability to the investment income surcharge for years up to 1983-84.

Taxpayers[1] by marginal rate: Numbers

(thousands)

Marginal rate	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*[2]1992-93*	*[2]1993-94*
20	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3,900	4,800
25	—	—	19,300	19,600	19,900	20,000	24,400	24,100	19,400	18,400
30	19,300	19,300	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
33	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
34	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
35	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
40	380	380	400	360	1,350	1,500	1,700	1,620	1,800	1,900
45	255	250	300	320	—	—	—	—	—	—
50	145	150	210	240	—	—	—	—	—	—
55	65	70	90	110	—	—	—	—	—	—
60	85	100	120	160	—	—	—	—	—	—
65	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
70	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
75	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
83	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	20,200	20,200	20,400	20,800	21,200	21,500	26,100	25,700	25,100	25,100

[1] Single people and married couples for years up to and including 1989-90; individuals from 1990-91.
[2] Provisional estimates projected from the 1991-92 Survey of Personal Incomes.

Taxpayers[1] by marginal rate: Percentages

(thousands)

Marginal rate[2]	*1973-74*	*1974-75*	*1975-76*	*1976-77*	*1977-78*	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*
20	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
25	—	—	—	—	—	15	12	—	—	—	—
30	98	—	—	—	—	—	85	96	95	95	96
33	—	96	—	—	—	82	—	—	—	—	—
34	—	—	94	—	95	—	—	—	—	—	—
35	—	—	—	93	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
38	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
40	1	—	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2
43	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
45	—	—	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
48	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
50	—	—	1	1	1	—	1	1	1	1	1
53	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
55	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Marginal rate[2]	1973-74	1974-75	1975-76	1976-77	1977-78	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84
58	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
60	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
63	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
65	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
68	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
70	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
73	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
75	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
83	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

[1] Single people and married couples for years up to and including 1989-90; individuals from 1990-91.
[2] Tax rate applicable to earned income. This excludes any liability to the investment income surcharge for years up to 1983-84.

Taxpayers[1] by marginal rate: Percentages

(thousands)

Marginal rate	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93[2]	1993-94[2]
20	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	16	19
25	—	—	95	94	94	93	93	94	77	73
30	96	96	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
33	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
34	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
35	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
40	2	2	2	2	6	7	7	6	7	8
45	1	1	1	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
50	1	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
55	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
60	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
65	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
70	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
75	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
83	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

[1] Single people and married couples for years up to and including 1989-90; individuals from 1990-91.
[2] Provisional estimates projected from the 1991-92 Survey of Personal Incomes.

TRANSPORT

"Establishment News ENT/2/94"

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will define the term "financial area of work" as used in section 7(IV) of his Department's "Establishment News ENT/2/94".

Mr. Norris: The Department's redundancy arrangements for non-industrial staff—set out in ENT/2/94—contain no such reference. Section 7(iv) refers to "the functional area of work".
This means an area of work identified by the particular function or type of work which is performed.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the compliance, in respect of the overall approach to redundancies and the principal of how to handle them, of "Establishment News" ENT/2/94 with section 188 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1993 as amended by section 32 (2)*(b)* of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The Department's redundancy arrangements for non-industrial staff—set out in ENT/2/94—contain an assurance that, in handling redundancy situations the Department or its agencies will act in accordance with statutory requirements as embodied in employment and other legislation.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what reference to section 34(2)*(b)* of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993 appears in "Establishment News" ENT/2/94.

Mr. Norris: The Department's redundancy arrangements—set out in ENT/2/94—contain an assurance that, in handling redundancy situations the Department or its agencies will act in accordance with statutory requirements as embodied in employment and other legislation. Since this assurance is all-embracing, no reference to particular sections of specific Acts is necessary.

British Transport Property (Trespass)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many hunts have been prosecuted for trespassing on British Transport property since 1990.

Mr. Freeman: The BTP charged one person with trespass following an incident at Brent Knoll, Somerset on 9 November 1991 involving the Weston and Brean hunt. The case was heard at Bridgwater magistrates court on 11 May 1992 and the offender was given an absolute discharge.

A second prosecution for trespass near Oxford in November 1993 involved the Bicester with Whaddon

Chase hunt. Two charges of trespass were brought against a member of the hunt who was summoned to appear before Bicester magistrates on 24 January. The case was subsequently withdrawn by the Crown Prosecution Service in the public interest.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many parliamentary questions, in the period November 1992 to March 1993, were answered with the response that the information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost; and how many were referred on to an agency chief executive.

Mr. Norris: The number of questions answered between November 1992 and March 1993 with a disproportionate cost reply was 13.

The number of questions referred to an agency chief executive during the same period was two.

M11 Link

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many dwellings were demolished in the Wanstead area solely for the purpose of facilitating the construction of the M11 road link; how many dwellings were demolished for other purposes; with whose agreement and with whose authority demolition took place; what was the cost of rehousing those displaced and who funded that expenditure; in what locality those displaced were rehoused; and what other plans there are for the future use of the land now vacant consequent on demolition.

Mr. Norris: This question relates to operational matters of the Highways Agency. I have asked the agency's chief executive, Mr. Lawrie Haynes, to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 4 May 1994:

As the question you tabled in the House about the demolition of dwellings in Wanstead for the A12 Hackney Wick to M11 Link Road relates to operational matters for the Highways Agency, I have been asked to reply to you direct.

The first of four main contracts for building the Link Road started in the Wanstead area last September. A total of 19 dwellings had to be demolished to make way for the construction. All were included in the made compulsory purchase Order for the scheme, together with other land and non-residential property needed in connection with the works. The only exception to this were areas of Epping Forest land, the acquisition of which was sanctioned by Act of Parliament. At the time of demolition, all the dwellings had been conveyed to the Secretary of State for Transport, many of them some considerable time ago under the provisions for planning blight. No dwellings in Wanstead have been demolished other than for the road; and no authority was needed for demolition beyond the statutory Orders for the new road.

For completeness, I should explain that up to 24 other dwellings in the Cambridge Park area of Wanstead had been demolished more than a decade ago: they had also been acquired under planning blight resulting from earlier proposals to widen this part of the A12.

Under the Land Compensation Act 1973, any responsibility for rehousing those displaced by compulsory purchase falls to the local housing authority. To date, no rehousing costs have been incurred by the Highways Agency, but the Act's provisions allow the relevant authority—for Wanstead, the London Borough of Redbridge—to make a claim in due course. Those rehoused were mostly tenants of either the Department, that Borough or a Housing Association. Some found alternative premises with the assistance of their landlords; others made their own arrangements. I am not privy to where they may have moved to.

You may wish to note that dwellings have also been demolished in the Leyton and Leytonstone areas either for works in advance of the further main contracts or in preparation for those contracts. In addition, two not strictly required for the works have had to come down for structural reasons. Other dwellings bought in connection with the road under planning blight or discretionary purchase provisions, but not needed for it, will ultimately be sold, as will any surplus non-residential property or marketable pockets of land.

Ship Registration

Ms Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with his European Union counterparts on the formation of a European Union ship register; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The Commission first put forward proposals for an additional register for Community vessels in 1989. There have been various discussions between the Commission and member states since then and I understand that the Commission is now considering whether to make further formal proposals.

Ms Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the minimum number of nationals in its crew required for a ship to be registered under the national flag in each of the appropriate member states of the European Union.

Mr. Norris: The information that we have about other member states indicates that they require the following minimum numbers of nationals for vessels on their register:

Belgium—Master
Denmark—Master. On vessels 9000 grt or more—Master, plus three ratings
France—Master plus one officer
Germany—Master
Greece—All officers and 60 per cent. of total complement
Republic of Ireland—All crew above deckhands must have Irish certificate of competency or recognised equivalent
Italy—EU nationals only
Luxembourg—Master should be EC national
Netherlands—Master
Portuguese—All
Spain—Master and First Officer

The United Kingdom currently requires that the master, chief mate and chief engineer must be British, Irish or Commonwealth citizens.

Public Service Vehicles

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet the President of the Board of Trade to discuss the exclusion of the continuous operator licence proposal for public service vehicles and heavy goods vehicles from the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill.

Mr. Norris: No. Continuous licences for operators of goods and public service vehicles would remove unnecessary bureaucratic procedures from the licensing systems and should remain part of the Bill. The proposal was debated at length during the Standing Committee's consideration of the Bill and the House will have the opportunity for further discussion on this topic during the remainder of the Bill's passage.

School Transport

Mr. Cann: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to improve safety standards on buses and coaches used to transport children to school; if he will specify the regulations which govern the transport of children to school; what proposals he has to amend these regulations; what plans he has to introduce a capping disregard for additional current expenditure in 1994-95 in respect of the additional cost to a council of dropping the three for two rule on dedicated school transport contract vehicles and requiring the fitting of seat belts on all contract minibuses and school minibuses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: We are currently considering the full technical and cost implications of fitting seat belts to all seats in all minibuses and coaches. We hope to publish the conclusions shortly.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education has advised me that school transport is governed by section 55 of the Education Act 1944 and there are no plans to amend this legislation.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has determined his principles for capping for 1994-95. These principles do not include any disregard in respect of expenditure on school transport.

Civil Servants (Business Appointments)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many civil servants in his Department applied in each year since 1986, through the business appointments system to take up an outside appointment *(a)* as an independent consultant, *(b)* with a firm of consultants and *(c)* in other employment; how many were referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments; and how many were granted.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* Since 1986, the Department of Transport has received 220 separate applications from 202 civil servants under the business appointment rules system; 63 applications have been to seek work as independent consultants, 39 to join a firm of consultants, and 118 to undertake other types of work. On a year-by-year basis, the detail of the applications is as follows:

	Independent consultant	*Consultancy firm*	*Other*	*Total applications*	*Total applicants*
1986	3	0	18	21	21
1987	7	1	14	22	21
1988	6	4	14	24	24
1989	6	3	18	27	24
1990	7	6	17	30	29
1991	15	4	9	28	21
1992	6	14	10	30	25
1993	7	7	15	29	28
1994	6	0	3	9	9
Total	63	39	118	220	202

Three of the cases shown were referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments, in 1986, 1990 and 1991.

All applications submitted have been approved.

Lowestoft Relief Road

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement clarifying the position on the Department's requirement of the home of Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Howard, 4 Blackheath road, Lowestoft NR33 7JG, for the A12 relief road, Lowestoft; and what is their entitlement to compensation.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 4 May 1994]:* I have written to my hon. Friend in response to his letter of 26 April on behalf of his constituents, Mr. and Mrs. Howard of 4 Blackheath road, Lowestoft.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Photo-chemical Oxidants

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action the Government will adopt as a result of the report from the photo-chemical oxidants review group in relation to pollution control measures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tim Smith: The publication of the report of the photochemical oxidants review group was announced by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Environment and Countryside on 19 April 1994. In his announcement, my hon. Friend referred to the pollution control measures taken by the Government and indicated that he shortly expects to receive recommendations from the expert panel on air quality standards on a standard for ozone based on effects on human health. The Government will be considering the need for further reductions of ozone precursors in the light of these recommendations and discussion at European and international level.

Ozone is one of the pollutants monitored in Northern Ireland as part of the national urban air quality monitoring network. The results measured show that ozone levels in Northern Ireland are well within national and international standards and indeed, are among the lowest in the United Kingdom.

Training and Employment Agency

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what targets have been set for the Training and Employment Agency for Northern Ireland for the period 1944 to 1997.

Mr. Tim Smith: The following targets have been set:

1. To increase the number of companies developing their management and work force skills through the company

development programme from 300 at April 1994 to 350 by March 1995 and to maintain this number until March 1997.

2. To assess companies on the company development programme—CDP—against the national standard "Investors in People" and to encourage commitment to the standard from the wider private sector with the aim of having 120 organisations—including 70 CDP companies—receiving recognition by March 1997.
3. To offer every company referred to the agency by the Industrial Development Board relevant information, advice and customised training.
4. To increase the proportion of youth training programme leavers who achieve a full qualification at national vocational qualification level 2 or above from 20 per cent. in 1993-94 to 45 per cent. in 1996-97.
5. To increase the proportion of job training programme leavers who achieve a full qualification at national vocational qualification level 2 or above from 17 per cent. in 1993-94 to 30 per cent. in 1996-97.
6. To provide an average of 9,200 temporary employment places with training through the action for community employment—ACE—programme with the aim of placing 36 per cent. of ACE leavers in jobs, training or futher education within three months of leaving.
7. To place 33,000 people into jobs in 1994-95.
8. To maintain the high levels of customer satisfaction and where possible, increase them.
9. To reduce administration costs by more than 3 per cent. in 1994-95.
10. To have the agency meet the national "Investors in People" standard for employers by September 1995.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Attendants

Mrs. Roche: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, how many attendants are currently employed in the House and its outbuildings; how many were employed in each of the last five years; what is the current ratio of attendants to other staff working in the House and its outbuildings, hon. Members, their staff and staff of the House; and what was the ratio for each of the last five years.

Mr. Beith: The numbers of attendants employed in the House and its outbuildings in the years requested are as follows:

	Number
1994	56
1993	56
1992	59
1991	[1]57
1990	[1]49
1989	[1]49

[1] These figures are the staff complement. Actual numbers employed may have varied slightly from these figures.

It is not possible to make an exact calculation of the ratio of attendants to other occupants of the parliamentary buildings because no record is kept to identify which Members' staff work at Westminster on a regular basis.

Cleaners

Mrs. Roche: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) of 20 April, *Official Report*, column *521*, for what reasons the number of House of Commons cleaners is being reduced.

Mr. Beith: I have asked the Serjeant at Arms to write to the hon. Lady. A copy of the letter will be placed in the Library.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Loans Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the average processing time to approval of a guarantee under the small firms loans guarantee scheme; and how his Department finances the transaction costs in such approvals.

Mr. McLoughlin: There is no information available on the time taken to process an application while with a lender. Once received by the DTI loan guarantee section, the average time taken to process an application in 1993-94 was 1·9 days.

None of the lenders transaction costs are met by the DTI. The cost of the small team of DTI staff involved in processing applications is met from the Department's running costs.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many applications under the small firms loan guarantee scheme have been made in each financial year since 1990-91; how many have been approved; and what have been the sums guaranteed and the cost to his Department.

Mr. McLoughlin: The number of applications made, guaranteed, their value and the net cost to the DTI in each year since 1990-91 is shown in the table:

	Applications received by DTI	*Applications guaranteed*	*Sum guaranteed (£ million)*	*Net cost (£ million)*
1990-91	3,676	3,387	84·56	16·5
1991-92	3,124	2,933	69·48	27·5
1992-93	2,408	2,342	52·35	19·2

Application figures for 1993-94 will be available shortly and are expected to show a significant increase in applications guaranteed. Fewer applications are guaranteed than are received. Rejections represent only a quarter of this difference. The rest is due to withdrawal by the borrower.

Guinness plc

Mr. Maxton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he intends publishing the report drawn up by the inspectors from his Department into the affairs of Guinness plc following their appointment by his predecessor in December 1986.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The inspectors have not yet completed their inspection, which was recommenced after the conclusion of the Guinness criminal trials. When their report has been submitted, consideration will be given to its publication.

Cross-media Ownership

Ms Mowlam: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many of his staff are assigned to the current review of cross-media ownership; and what is the cost to his departmental budget of the cross-media ownership review.

Mr. McLoughlin: A number of staff combine work on the review of the cross media ownership with other duties. At present it forms the main duty of two full-time members of staff and occupies a significant part of the time of three others. The cost this year of the individuals most involved, allowing for time spent on other duties, is likely to be around £184,000.

Nuclear Power

Mr. William Ross: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the total sums of public money invested in the nuclear power industry since 1963 in cash terms and at 1993 prices; and what percentage of the United Kingdom's electricity is now produced by nuclear energy.

Mr. Heseltine: The main public sector companies in the nuclear power industry are Nuclear Electric and Scottish Nuclear. An indication of past investment in these companies is provided by the gross value—before depreciation—of tangible fixed assets stated in their published accounts. At 31 March 1993, the historic cost value of these assets was about £10 billion and the current cost value was about £15 billion. In accordance with standard accounting conventions, asset values are stated at the lower of cost—replacement cost in the case of current cost accounts—or value to the business.

In 1993 about 26 per cent. of electricity available from the United Kingdom public supply system was produced by nuclear power stations in the United Kingdom.

Source: Energy Trends, Tables 18 and 19.

Nuclear Review

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Warley, West (Mr. Spellar) of 25 April, *Official Report*, column 7, if he will list the organisations or individuals that have made representations on the nuclear review; and what response he gave to these representations.

Mr. Heseltine: This information can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

British Coal

Mrs. Roche: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many miners are currently employed by British Coal.

Mr. Heseltine: The number of wage earners on British Coal's colliery books at the end of March 1994 was 10,400.

Sustainable Development

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will seek the advice of the panel on sustainable development, on the subject of the programme of work of the Trade and Environment Committee of the World Trade Organisation.

Mr. Heseltine: The members of the proposed World Trade Organisation have agreed that a work programme considering certain important trade and environment issues will be carried out by a committee of the WTO preparatory committee, and then almost certainly by a committee of the WTO itself. The Government will continue to take a close interest in this work.

Privatisation (Consultants)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will estimate the cost of employing consultants in connection with privatisation programmes in which his Department and the Department of Energy have been engaged since 1980.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 4 May 1994]:* A reply would incur disproportionate cost in view of the number of privatisations since 1980.

Consumer Councils

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received from Lady Wilcox, chairperson of the National Consumer Council for Great Britain, in relation to the proposed re-appointment of Miss Beata Brookes as chairperson of the Welsh Consumer Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* The views of the chairman of the National Consumer Council were sought on the reappointment of Miss Brookes as chairman of the Welsh Consumer Council and these were taken into consideration.

Public Utilities

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of the post-tax profits of the *(a)* gas, *(b)* electricity and *(c)* water privatised utilities was paid out in dividends in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Derrell: I have been asked to reply.

The table shows the percentage of post-tax profits paid out in dividends by the privatised companies in the industries concerned. All the data are for financial years ending 31 March 1993 with the exception of British Gas plc, whose data are for the year ending 31 December 1993.

Privatised utilities' dividends

Industry	*Proportion of post-tax profits paid in dividends Per cent.*
Gas	[1]–117·2
Electricity (England and Wales)	33·6
Scottish Electricity companies	41·3
Water and Sewerage companies	32·2

[1] British Gas plc made a loss. Dividends paid from reserves.

ENVIRONMENT

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many parliamentary questions, in the period November 1992 to March 1993, were answered

with the response that the information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost; and how many were referred on to an agency chief executive.

Mr. Gummer: The number of answers given to parliamentary questions between November 1992 and March 1993 recorded in the POLIS database as including a reference to part or all of the information being available only at disproportionate cost or because the information was not held, collected or recorded centrally was 41 out of a total of 2,264 questions answered during this period. During the same period, seven questions were referred to an agency chief executive for reply.

Housing Renovation Grants

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will change the rules to enable an applicant's mortgage to be taken into consideration when assessing an application for a housing renovation grant.

Sir George Young: We are currently reviewing the future of the private sector renewal programme following last year's consultation exercise and will announce the conclusions in due course.

Development Corporations

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of gross expenditure is to be spent on staff and administrative costs by *(a)* the Leeds development corporation and *(b)* the Central Manchester development corporation in 1994-95.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 27 April 1994, *Official Report*, column *206*.

Beckenham Place

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department will determine the appeal on the planning application for the proposed development at Beckenham place, Beckenham, Kent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: A decision on the proposals will be made soon.

Housing Associations

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much was allocated to living over the shop schemes under the flats over shops funding programme in 1993-94, how much has been spent; and what was the average length of lease obtained by housing associations involved in such schemes.

Sir George Young: Ten million pounds was allocated to the flats over shops programme in 1993-94. Early indications are that 97 per cent. of this has been spent. However, we are unable to confirm this until the final claims for supplementary credit approvals—SCAs—have been received from local authorities. SCAs are issued retrospectively, following the receipt of a certified claim giving details of expenditure. Local authorities have six months following the end of the relevant financial year in which to submit claims. Data on the average length of lease obtained by housing associations in 1993-94 are not yet available. For the first year of the programme, 1992-93, an average lease length of 13 years was obtained.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he has given in regard to the effect of opencast mining on greenfield sites, in regard to agricultural production and other matters, following the conclusion of such projects.

Mr. Baldry: My Department has provided advice on how the quality of existing agricultural land should be taken into account in determining opencast mining proposals on greenfield sites in Mineral Planning Guidance Note 3—"Opencast Coal Mining", and Mineral Planning Guidance Note 7—"The Reclamation of Mineral Workings".

MPG3 is being revised, a consultation draft was published in December and the comments are currently being considered. MPG7 also provides advice on mitigating any adverse effects of opencast working and of the standards to be achieved at the end of restoration and aftercare, following conclusion of working. The standards are defined either by the restoration of the pre-existing physical characteristics, or by "fitness for use", which determine agricultural production.

International Monetary Fund

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he was consulted by the Chancellor of the Exchequer regarding trade and the environment before the Chancellor addressed the recent meeting of the interim committee of the International Monetary Fund.

Mr. Atkins: The Government have set out their views on trade and the environment in "Sustainable Development, the United Kingdom Strategy", published in January.

Local Authority Services

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what action he has taken following the curtailing of local authorities' ability to charge for services as a result of the 1991 McCarthy and Stone judgment;

(2) what progress has been made since the publication in 1986 of the Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government", to give local authorities powers to charge for providing services to individuals or companies.

Mr. Baldry: Under section 150 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the Secretary of State may make regulations providing that local authorities may charge for activities not already covered by a specific charging power or duty, with the exception of functions listed in section 152.

Two new charging powers have been introduced under section 150—the Houses in Multiple Occupation (Charges for Registration Schemes) Regulations 1991 and the Local Authorities (Recovery of Costs for Public Path Orders) Regulations 1993. My right hon. Friend intends to make further regulations soon which would enable authorities to charge for dealing with supplementary land search inquiries in respect of proposed property transactions. We will consult the local authority associations shortly on a number of other proposals for regulations under section 150.

Special Grants

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what expenditure is planned for 1994-95 under the special grants programme.

Mr. Baldry: In the current financial year—1994-95—the full allocation of £1·262 million is planned to be expended on the special grants programme.

Urban Regeneration

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all those community-led urban regeneration schemes assisted or funded from these programmes in the years 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94; and if he will make available in the Library a copy of the bidding guidance notes.

Mr. Baldry: The information sought cannot be produced in the form specified. In previous years a number of Government Departments, in addition to the Department of the Environment, have contributed to community-led urban regeneration through different programmes. From 1 April 20 of these programmes have been included in the single regeneration budget. I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) on 13 April 1994, *Official Report*, column *174*.

Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what performance targets he has set the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre executive agency for 1994-95.

Sir George Young: The agency's key target for 1994-95 is to reduce its net operating deficit—exclusive of rent[1]—from an expected £0·711 million in 1993-94 to £0·382.

The agency will also aim to increase total revenue from the centre's activities from an expected £5·129 million in 1993-94 to £5·616 million; to increase the number of calendar days with events at the centre from an expected 285 days or 78 per cent. in 1993-94 to 299 days or 82 per cent.[2]; and to improve its revenue to cost ratio from an expected 1:1·14 in 1993-94 to 1:1·07.

[1]An annual rent of £6·4 million was charged for the agency's occupation of the centre with effect from 1993-94.

[2]This target is based on an industry standard agreed by the International Congress and Convention Association. It compares with increasing overall occupancy for the main letting areas from an expected 41 per cent. in 1993-94 to 45 per cent. based on a previous measure which was unique to the centre.

Council Tax

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the maximum council tax chargeable by Liverpool city council; and what provisions exist for raising it.

Mr. Curry *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* Council taxes must be calculated and set in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the relevant secondary legislation. Central Government have no direct control over the rate of council tax charged by an authority: capping constrains an authority's revenue budget rather than council taxes per se.

Urban Policies

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list every urban policy that has been instituted or operated from 1979, the date that each scheme began operating, where appropriate when they ceased operating and the funds available on an annual basis at current prices.

Mr. Baldry: Economic, social and physical regeneration is supported through main programmes by several Government Departments and by targeted initiatives. My reply to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) on 25 April, *Official Report*, columns *36-37*, contained detailed information about the latter programmes, including spending from 1981-82. For the urban programme, which began in 1979, the additional figures sought are £83 million for 1979-80 and £112 milion for 1980-81 in cash terms. All the programmes listed in the earlier reply have now been combined within the single regeneration budget from 1 April 1994.

While not included in the earlier reply, enterprise zones, also a targeted urban initiative were launched in 1981. They offer a range of incentives to industrial and commercial firms in designated areas. These have not involved any direct expenditure, but an estimated £1·7 billion has been forgone in rates and taxes.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Cross-media Ownership

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many of his staff are assigned to the current review of cross-media ownership; and what is the cost to his departmental budget of the cross-media ownership review.

Mr. Brooke: Four staff are assigned full-time to the review, at a cost of £131,000. There is a budget of some £48,000 for the running costs of the review.

Millennium Commission

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the estimated cost for 1994-95 of the Millennium Commission; and how much will be spent on *(a)* salaries and expenses of staff and commissioners, *(b)* publicity and *(c)* administration.

Mr. Brooke: The total estimated administration cost of the Millennium Commission for 1994-95 is £1,000,000, of which:

(a) Salary and staff costs are expected to be £285,000; and
(b) Publicity costs are expected to be £45,000.

Television Crime Reconstructions

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what further research his Department is planning into links between television programmes featuring crime reconstructions which are made purely for entertainment and women's fear of crime.

Mr. Brooke: I would look to the broadcasting regulatory bodies to commission any further research they considered necessary. The Broadcasting Standards Council, which is funded by my Department, has commissioned work in this area in the past.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to monitor television programmes featuring crime reconstructions which are not made in order to apprehend criminals and to discuss these programmes and their effect on women's fear of crime with television companies.

Mr. Brooke: Monitoring television programmes is the responsibility of the broadcasting regulatory authorities. I am meeting the chairmen of those bodies shortly to discuss concern about the portrayal of violence on television.

Executive Agencies

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what targets he has set for the executive agencies in his Department.

Mr. Brooke: The following targets have been set for 1994-95:

For the Historic Royal Palaces Agency:

Financial Targets:

Commercial surplus	£6 million
Call on the taxpayer	£8·9 million

Efficiency Target:

Savings on running costs	2 per cent.

Conservation Target:

To complete the fire prevention works planned for 1994-95 and the programme of works identified by the building condition surveys as being a priority for 1994-95; to undertake further detailed inspections of the specific areas identified by the surveys as being a priority for 1995-96.

Visitor Satisfaction Measures[1]*:*

Value for money	0·7 to 1·0
Enjoyment	above 1·35
Helpful and friendly staff	above 1·35

[1] Visitor ratings are assessed from market research interviews with 900 visitors, undertaken by independent consultants each summer. 2·0 is Extremely Good; 1·5 is Very Good; 1·0 is Quite Good; 0 is OK; −1·0 is Quite Poor; −2·0 is Very Poor.

For the Royal Parks Agency:

Fabric:

(i) Prepare contract documents for the four grounds maintenance contracts which expire in March 1995, incorporating lessons from existing contracts. Let new contracts or extend existing ones.

(ii) Draw up and commence priority programme of works required to remove the six listed structures which are on the 'at risk' register.

(iii) Prepare detailed proposals for and consult all relevant parties about the pedestrianisation of the end of the Mall, with a view to commencing the project (if approved) in 1994-95.

(iv) Complete phase II of the Speakers Corner/Marble Arch competition (ie develop detailed designs from the six prize-winning sketch designs from phase I).

Financial:

(i) Increase income from £1·3 million to £1·8 million from sales, permits, fees, rents, licences, concessions and car-parking.

(ii) Achieve 1·5 per cent. improvement in running costs efficiency.

Park Users:

(i) Assess initial visitor survey results and achieve an overall quality rating of six marks out of 10 in response to the survey question "Overall, how would you rate the quality of this park?"

EDUCATION

Pupil Statistics

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many pupils in primary schools, though not in designated nursery classes in January 1993, were born between 1 September 1986 and 31 August 1987, in each local education authority.

Mr. Robin Squire: The number of pupils aged five at the beginning of the school year 1992-93 being taught in infant classes in maintained primary schools in each local education authority area in England is shown in the table.

Pupils aged 5 at 31 August 1992 in infant classes in maintained primary schools in each Local Education Authority in England. Position as at January 1993

LEA	*Pupils*
Corporation of London	26
Camden	1,465
Greenwich	2,924
Hackney	2,419
Hammersmith	1,292
Islington	2,106
Kensington and Chelsea	927
Lambeth	2,707
Lewisham	2,926
Southwark	3,086
Tower Hamlets	2,917
Wandsworth	2,329
Westminster	1,271
Barking	2,108
Barnet	3,312
Bexley	2,779
Brent	2,978
Bromley	3,247
Croydon	3,872
Ealing	3,543
Enfield	3,296
Haringey	2,512
Harrow	2,354
Havering	2,804
Hillingdon	2,792
Hounslow	2,595
Kingston upon Thames	1,416
Merton	1,927
Newham	3,610
Redbridge	2,788
Richmond upon Thames	1,561
Sutton	1,926
Waltham Forest	2,767
Birmingham	14,720
Coventry	4,213
Dudley	3,921
Sandwell	4,102
Solihull	2,611
Walsall	3,680
Wolverhampton	3,335
Knowsley	2,435
Liverpool	6,754
St. Helens	2,329
Sefton	3,606
Wirral	4,350
Bolton	3,550
Bury	2,335
Manchester	6,166
Oldham	3,252
Rochdale	2,985
Salford	3,028
Stockport	3,496
Tameside	3,105
Trafford	2,631
Wigan	4,091
Barnsley	2,887
Doncaster	4,180
Rotherham	3,418
Sheffield	6,112

LEA	Pupils
Bradford	7,022
Calderdale	2,654
Kirklees	5,098
Leeds	8,982
Wakefield	4,227
Gateshead	2,365
Newcastle upon Tyne	3,363
North Tyneside	2,521
South Tyneside	2,138
Sunderland	4,049
Isles of Scilly	16
Avon	11,407
Bedfordshire	7,450
Berkshire	9,355
Buckinghamshire	8,142
Cambridgeshire	8,475
Cheshire	12,123
Cleveland	8,224
Cornwall	5,612
Cumbria	5,788
Derbyshire	11,500
Devon	11,775
Dorset	6,952
Durham	7,471
East Sussex	7,483
Essex	18,641
Gloucestershire	6,390
Hampshire	19,396
Hereford and Worcester	7,935
Hertfordshire	12,039
Humberside	11,701
Isle of Wight	1,433
Kent	18,938
Lancashire	18,356
Leicestershire	11,663
Lincolnshire	6,881
Norfolk	8,592
North Yorkshire	8,386
Northamptonshire	7,807
Northumberland	3,742
Nottinghamshire	12,766
Oxfordshire	6,585
Shropshire	5,135
Somerset	5,432
Staffordshire	13,394
Suffolk	7,636
Surrey	10,394
Warwickshire	6,006
West Sussex	7,657
Wiltshire	7,395
ENGLAND	596,366

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many full-time equivalent pupils in non-designated nursery classes at the latest available date were born between *(a)* 1 September 1987 and 31 December 1987, *(b)* 1 January 1988 and 31 March 1988 and *(c)* 1 April 1988 and 31 August 1988.

Mr. Robin Squire: The number of full-time equivalent pupils aged four at the beginning of the school year 1992-93 being taught in infant classes in maintained primary schools in England in January 1993 is shown in the table.

Pupils aged 4 on 31 August 1992 in infant classes in maintained primary schools in England January 1993

Date of Birth	FTE Pupils[1]
1 September 1987—31 December 1987	200,782
1 January 1988—31 March 1988	146,100
1 April 1988—31 August 1988	155,592

[1] Part-time pupils count as 0·5.

School Governors

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what information is available to his Department regarding the numbers of men and women governors of grant-maintained schools, by type of school and by category of governor; and how such information is collected.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department has no information on the numbers of men and women governors of grant-maintained schools.

Early Retirement

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the information he has available on expenditure in each local education authority on early retirement compensation in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Robin Squire: Information on expenditure by each local education authority on early retirement compensation for the years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93, is given in the following table.

Expenditure on Crombie and teacher premature retirement compensation payments

	1990-91 £000	1991-92 £000	1992-93 £000
Corporation of London	0	0	0
Camden	0	0	0
Greenwich	0	0	*23
Hackney	0	0	*21
Hammersmith	0	0	0
Islington	0	0	*15
Kensington and Chelsea	0	0	101
Lambeth	0	0	*20
Lewisham	0	0	0
Southwark	0	0	0
Tower Hamlets	0	0	*21
Wandsworth	0	0	0
Westminster	0	0	0
Barking	605	290	751
Barnet	1,344	1,425	1,475
Bexley	0	0	0
Brent	0	0	0
Bromley	981	586	551
Croydon	248	630	474
Ealing	861	479	636
Enfield	0	0	705
Haringey	474	541	*339
Harrow	353	534	*313
Havering	0	0	0
Hillingdon	0	1	0
Hounslow	11	208	*430
Kingston upon Thames	304	358	*231
Merton	0	0	*244
Newham	769	269	*425
Redbridge	288	387	405
Richmond upon Thames	0	0	0
Sutton	0	0	0
Waltham Forest	324	5	13
Birmingham	3,422	3,947	5,443
Coventry	12	2,982	*981
Dudley	884	851	791
Sandwell	0	0	0
Solihull	0	0	553
Walsall	0	643	1,567
Wolverhampton	94	195	326
Knowsley	0	957	945
Liverpool	2,727	3,780	3,058
St. Helens	953	1,126	*581

	1990-91 £000	1991-92 £000	1992-93 £000
Sefton	1,496	1,536	0
Wirral	231	182	97
Bolton	898	1,022	*687
Bury	848	1,031	*503
Manchester	2,144	2,815	4,400
Oldham	0	0	0
Rochdale	469	493	806
Salford	0	0	0
Stockport	512	447	547
Tameside	0	0	933
Trafford	0	0	*533
Wigan	1,377	1,681	1,999
Barnsley	200	532	35
Doncaster	0	379	0
Rotherham	203	271	0
Sheffield	40	0	0
Bradford	1,354	1,153	2,860
Calderdale	453	0	0
Kirklees	275	1,465	838
Leeds	0	0	3
Wakefield	1,228	1,389	*840
Gateshead	0	44	73
Newcastle upon Tyne	305	1,261	*1,608
North Tyneside	0	0	508
South Tyneside	0	0	0
Sunderland	364	470	397
Isles of Scilly	0	0	0
Avon	0	0	747
Bedfordshire	0	0	0
Berkshire	704	812	779
Buckinghamshire	249	265	1,105
Cambridgeshire	899	1,447	1,705
Cheshire	191	124	1,874
Cleveland	1,328	1,720	*696
Cornwall	0	0	0
Cumbria	0	0	0
Derbyshire	1,320	1,556	696
Devon	0	0	0
Dorset	782	1,183	1,443
Durham	−14	0	0
East Sussex	547	877	1,039
Essex	1,915	1,945	2,066
Gloucestershire	1,567	2,150	0
Hampshire	1,862	2,215	2,750
Hereford and Worcester	0	264	0
Hertfordshire	453	1,734	1,769
Humberside	726	759	854
Isle of Wight	94	108	124
Kent	314	151	223
Lancashire	4,374	4,804	*1,654
Leicestershire	1,267	2,075	2,275
Lincolnshire	968	148	126
Norfolk	1,200	196	0
North Yorkshire	0	0	0
Northamptonshire	111	128	494
Northumberland	0	0	0
Nottinghamshire	1,066	2,295	0
Oxfordshire	1,389	1,585	1,586
Shropshire	16	19	18
Somerset	0	0	0
Staffordshire	2,715	3,214	3,987
Suffolk	14	156	0
Surrey	0	0	2,791
Warwickshire	922	1,269	1,428
West Sussex	0	0	0
Wiltshire	0	0	872

Note:

1. Figures are derived from local education authorities' returns of their spending to the Department of the Environment.
2. The figures for 1992-93 include estimates of expenditure for LEAs marked "*". The 1992-93 figures are subject to final checking by the Department of Environment and the Department for Education.
3. The quality of information recorded on returns from LEAs is partly dependant on the accounting practices adopted. These can differ considerably.

English Language Courses

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many complaints he has received in the last 12 months about unfair competition between private and state-funded colleges that both teach English language courses to overseas students, but where the latter are in receipt of subsidies provided by the Further Education Funding Council in order to do so; and what information he has with regard to consequential job losses in the private sector resulting from this practice.

Mr. Boswell: The Department has received six letters in the last 12 months on concerns about the sources of funding for English as a foreign language—EFL—courses in private and state-funded colleges. The Department holds no information on the number of staff employed in the delivery of EFL in the private sector.

PRIME MINISTER

Convention on Human Rights

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to incorporate the European convention on human rights into British law.

The Prime Minister: None.

Mobile Telephones and Pagers

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister how many *(a)* portable telephones, *(b)* pagers and electronic bleepers and *(c)* car telephones are currently used by his Department; what are the annual costs of operating this equipment; and to which personnel it is made available.

The Prime Minister: There are 14 portable telephones, 19 pagers and four car telephones currently in use in No. 10 Downing street. The annual cost of operating the equipment is approximately £12,800.

The equipment is made available to those personnel who need to keep in contact with the office for purposes of official duty.

Cyprus

Mr. Cox: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he has had with the Prime Minister of Turkey on the present United Nations-sponsored talks on Cyprus; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I discussed the United Nations-sponsored package of confidence-building measures with Mrs. Ciller in the margins of the NATO summit on 10 January. I sent her a message on 6 April urging her to encourage Mr. Denktash to adopt a more constructive approach to the negotiations on the package. The United Nations Secretary-General will shortly submit a report on the talks to the United Nations Security Council.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 5 May.

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 5 May.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Agency

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when Mr. Croft, Ref. 353 IJOH1002188491, of Stockton-on-Tees will be officially notified by the Child Support Agency that his initial assessment has been withdrawn.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Tim Devlin, dated 5 May 1994:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the interim child maintenance assessment made in respect of Mr. Stephen Croft by the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Croft was originally advised that an interim maintenance assessment would be made because insufficient information had been supplied to permit a full assessment. Following a telephone call to the Agency, a two week extension was agreed. Unfortunately at the expiry of the extension, the interim assessment was made despite the fact that the relevant information had been received in the meantime. When this error came to light, immediate action was taken to cancel the interim assessment, and Mr. Croft was notified of this on 29 April 1994.

I hope you will convey to Mr. Croft my sincere apologies for any anxiety or distress which the actions of the Agency may have caused. I hope you will also accept my assurance that I shall be keeping a close watch on the developments in this case.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what benefit savings the Child Support Agency achieved in 1993-94.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for the Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 3 May at columns *423-24*.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the first year of operation of the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: It is too early to make a full assessment of the first year of operation of the Child Support Agency. This will be done when the annual report is available later this year. Meanwhile I meet regularly with the Child Support Agency chief executive and look carefully at all the representations that have been made, and we keep the Child Support Agency under constant review.

Pensions

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many and what percentage of those people retiring in the last year for which figures are available had a total pension income amounting to *(a)* 100 per cent. or more, *(b)* between 90 per cent. and 99 per cent., *(c)* between 80 per cent. and 89 per cent., *(d)* between 70 per cent. and 79 per cent., *(e)* between 60 per cent. and 69 per cent., *(f)* between 50 per cent. and 59 per cent., *(g)* between 40 per cent. and 49 per cent., *(h)* between 30 per cent. and 39 per cent., *(i)* between 20 per cent. and 29 per cent. and *(j)* 10 per cent. or less, of (i) their final salary and (ii) average earnings.

Mr. Hague: Information on pension income as a proportion of final salary is not available. Information on pension income in relation to average earnings is not available in precisely the form requested. Estimates, which relate to female pensioners aged 60 to 64 and to male pensioners aged 65 to 69, are in the tables.

Pension income of male pensioners aged 65 to 69 compared to average earnings

	Number (000's)	Percentage of male pensioners 65 to 69
0-10 per cent.	[1]121	10
11-19 per cent.	308	25
20-29 per cent.	376	30
30-39 per cent.	[1]140	11
40-59 per cent.	[1]154	12
60 per cent. and over	139	11

Pension income of female pensioners aged 60 to 64 compared to average earnings

	Number (000's)	Percentage of female pensioners 60 to 64
0-10 per cent.	440	[2]31
11-19 per cent.	417	29
20-29 per cent.	271	19
30-39 per cent.	127	9
40 per cent. and over	177	12

[1] Denotes unreliably small sample size.

[2] This group includes married women whose husbands are aged less than 65 and who have no entitlement to a pension on their own National Insurance record.

Notes:

1. All figures are estimates and should be treated as such.
2. Figures are mean averages; they relate to individuals, not to pensioner units or households.
3. Estimates derive from the Family Expenditure Survey for the combined years 1990-91 and the Government Actuary's Department's Survey of Occupational Pension 1991.
4. Percentages may not sum due to rounding.

Operational Strategy

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much has been spent on consultants for operational strategy in each of the last five years.

Mr. Scott: The cost of consultancy services for the operational strategy over the five years ending 1992-93 was £191 million. Figures for 1993-94 are not yet available. Individual years' figures are in the table.

	£ million
1988-89	40·6
1989-90	31·2
1990-91	49·6
1991-92	37·5
1992-93	32·1

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current estimated total cost of operational strategy to 1998, in real terms; by how much this figure exceeds the initial estimated cost; and what percentage of the estimated cost is the cost of outside consultants.

Mr. Scott: The most recent—1993—estimated total cost in real terms of the operational strategy to 1998-99 is £2·6 billion, which includes an estimated £315 million—11·9 per cent.—for consultancy services.

The total cost of the operational strategy was originally —1982—estimated at £713 million. The current estimated cost exceeds the initial estimate by £1·9 billion. The original specification did not embrace the substantial cost of subsequent changes in social security legislation, notably the 1988 social security reforms. Estimates of total savings over the period of the operational strategy have also been revised from an initial estimate of some £1·9 billion—1982—to £3·3 billion—1993.

Security

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the use of private detective agencies and security companies by his Department.

Mr. Scott: This Department and its executive agencies use private companies to carry out a range of activities. This is done as part of our continuing search for better value for money. The companies we use include a private firm to serve documents in connection with the collection of arrears of national insurance contributions and private security companies for the guarding of some of our sites countrywide.

Personnel Costs

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of Information Technology Services Agency's total personnel costs for software development has been spent on outside consultants in each of the last five years.

Mr. Scott: The costs for software development and continuing support for 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94 are in the table. This work is done using a mixture of civil servants and external contractors some of whom are supplied by consultancy firms. The information for 1989-90 and 1990-91 is not readily available.

£'000	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
Total personnel costs for software development (millions)	58·7	73·1	69·7
Cost of consultants/contractors (millions)	38·5	45·5	43·4
Consultancy/contractors as a percentage of the total	65·6	62·2	62·3

Lone Parents

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost to the Exchequer of allowing single parents on income support to retain *(a)* £5, *(b)* £10 and *(c)* £15 of any maintenance payments.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost to his Department in the form of reduced estimated savings of the introduction of a maintenance disregard of £15 for lone parents with care who are in receipt of income support.

Mr. Burt: It is estimated that the cost of £5, £10 and £15 child support maintenance disregards in income support would be approximately £145 million, £290 million and £435 million in the long run.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Council of Ministers

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) of 26 April, *Official Report*, column *123*, what is the scope of the safeguards to which he refers in regard to the disclosure of information by the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The code of conduct on access to information sets out a number of grounds on which access to documents can be refused. Copies of the code were placed in the Library of the House on 14 January.

Mr. Van den Broek

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 26 April, *Official Report*, column *125*, relating to Mr. Van den Broek, if he will give reasons for his answer.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The suggestion of my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North was neither practical nor necessary.

Libya

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contacts his Department has with the Red Cross or the Red Crescent concerning the blockade on Libya and its effect on medical supplies.

Mr. Goodlad: We have had no contacts with the Red Cross or the Red Crescent concerning the blockade on Libya and its effect on medical supplies.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from UNICEF concerning the sanctions on Libya and their effect on children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has received no representations from UNICEF concerning the sanctions on Libya and their effects on children.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations the United Nations Security Council has received from *(a)* UNICEF and *(b)* UNESCO concerning the effects of the United Nations sanctions on Libya.

Mr. Goodlad: We are aware of no representations which the Security Council has received from UNICEF or UNESCO concerning the effects of United Nations sanctions on Libya.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from UNESCO concerning the effect of sanctions on Libya; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has received no representations from UNESCO concerning the effect of sanctions on Libya.

Rwanda

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the withdrawal of United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda forces from Rwanda is planned to be a temporary measure; and if he will encourage the United Nations to draw up plans for a strengthened force and mandate to return at the earliest possible moment.

Mr. Goodlad: Security Council resolution 912 reduced the authorised size of UNAMIR, but stressed the Security Council's readiness to consider any recommendations which the Security General might make concerning the future force level and mandate of UNAMIR in light of developments.

We support the United Nations' efforts to promote a ceasefire and to encourage the parties to resume the peace process.

EU Common Foreign and Security Policy

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the items on the agenda at the EU common foreign and security policy working group meeting on 7 April.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The subject of anti-personnel landmines was one of a number of subjects discussed at the working group meeting on 7 April. However, the agendas of the meetings of this group are not published.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library copies of statements made by, or on behalf of, Her Majesty's Government at the EU common foreign and security policy working group meeting on 7 April.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Copies of all agreed European Union common foreign and security policy statements are placed in the Libraries of both Houses. No such statements issued from this meeting.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which state raised the subject of anti-personnel mines at the EU common foreign and security policy working group meeting on 7 April; what proposals were made; and what was the response of Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The presidency is responsible for preparing the agenda of these meetings. However, the issue of landmines is currently of common interest to all European Union member states.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the next meeting of the EU common foreign and security policy working group is scheduled.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The date has not yet been arranged.

European Commission

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 26 April, *Official Report*, column *125*, on the powers of the European Commission, in what way he wishes the Commission to become more accountable.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Powers exist to hold the European Commission to account, notably under articles 140, 143, 144 and 158 of the treaty of Rome. It is right that the Commission should be fully accountable for its actions and these treaty provisions need to be rigorously applied.

SCOTLAND

Security

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the use of private detective agencies and security companies by his Department.

Mr. Lang: My Department has made limited use of private detective agencies when attempting to locate individuals or companies who have defaulted on the terms and conditions of regional assistance grants. In addition, private sector companies are contracted to provide security guarding services for various Scottish Office buildings and properties.

Prisons (Suicides)

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all the self-inflicted deaths that have occurred in Scottish prison establishments over the past 10 years, giving details of the name, age, status, offence and inquest verdict of each of the deceased and the names of the prisons in which the deaths occurred.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Scottish Prison Service under its chief executive, Mr. E. W. Frizzell. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Mr. Tony Worthington, dated 5 May 1994:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your Question about self-inflicted deaths in Scottish penal establishments over the past 10 years, including details of the prisoners' name, age, status and offence and the outcome of the Fatal Accident Inquiry into each death.

The information requested is provided, save for the details of the prisoners' offence (or alleged offence): this information is not meanwhile available and I shall write to you again as soon as our researches are complete.

Suicides in penal custody between January 1983 and December 1993

Date	*Name*	*Age*	*Establishment*	*Sentence or remand*	*Determination*
1983					
16 January 1983	John Leinster Stewart	34	Peterhead	6 years	Overdose
14 February 1983	William McGlinchey	20	Longriggend	Remand	Cell fire, asphyxiation

Date	Name	Age	Establishment	Sentence or remand	Determination
15 April 1983	Edward Wm Graham	23	Barlinnie	Remand	Hanging
6 July 1983	John Beagan	51	Edinburgh	Life	Hanging
14 August 1983	Robert King	18	Glenochil YOI	3 years	Hanging
28 August 1983	Thomas Mochar	26	Barlinnie	20 months	Hanging
1984					
16 January 1984	Hugh Morrow	35	Barlinnie	Remand	Hanging
16 February 1984	William McDonald	16	Glenochil DC	Remand	Hanging
2 March 1984	Thomas William Kerr	39	Barlinnie	Remand	Hanging
27 September 1984	Martyn Linton	27	Edinburgh	Remand	Hanging
15 November 1984	Arthur Padden	48	Barlinnie	Remand	Inhalation of toxic fumes in cell fire
1985					
26 January 1985	Kenneth Peter Isherwood	47	Perth	Remand	Hanging
18 February 1985	Angus Stewart Boyd	17	Glenochil DC	3 months	Hanging
24 February 1985	Robert Kelly	38	Barlinnie	Remand	Hanging
13 April 1985	Derek John Richard Harris	16	Glenochil YOI	3 months	Hanging
2 June 1985	John Stanley Buchanan	25	Barlinnie	6 years	Hanging
20 June 1985	John Joseph Sinclair	33	Barlinnie	5 years	Hanging
1986					
16 February 1986	William Myles Moorehouse	25	Perth	5 years	Jumping
24 March 1986	Frank Lee	18	Edinburgh	Remand	Hanging
22 April 1986	Jack Blake	55	Barlinnie	Life	Jumping
11 June 1986	Jean Margaret McLean	27	Cornton Vale	Remand	Hanging
16 June 1986	Christopher Phillips	27	Barlinnie	18 months	Hanging
6 July 1986	John Hendry Swindle	22	Perth	3 years	Hanging
21 August 1986	Jarvis Torrance	50	Barlinnie	Remand	Hanging
1987					
3 June 1987	Peter Barnes	26	Edinburgh	Remand	Hanging
1 August 1987	Terence Bryce	29	Barlinnie	6 months	Hanging
30 October 1987	Gerald Stafford	31	Barlinnie	Remand	Hanging
31 October 1987	Thomas William Kerr	17	Dumfries	Remand	Hanging
5 November 1987	John William Dwyer	34	Glenochil	Life	Hanging
28 December 1987	Kenneth Alexander Heron	21	Glenochil	4 years	Inhalation of vomit, asphyxia and solvent abuse
28 December 1987	Anthony Boyle	23	Barlinnie	Remand	Hanging
1988					
30 January 1988	Hugh McGarvie	26	Barlinnie	3 months + 3 months c/c	Hanging
3 March 1988	Alexander Nicol	29	Barlinnie	3 months	Hanging
27 March 1988	George Smart	49	Barlinnie	Remand	Hanging
5 June 1988	Ian Barrie Connor	25	Barlinnie	Remand	Hanging
14 June 1988	Gordon McRae	27	Glenochil	3 years	Hanging
1 July 1988	Alan McGavin	24	Barlinnie	Life	Hanging
13 August 1988	John McLean	30	Barlinnie	Remand	Hanging
1989					
7 February 1989	George Ferguson	39	Barlinnie	Remand	Self-inflicted wounds to left arm
5 March 1989	Martin McRae	31	Shotts	Life	Hanging
4 June 1989	James Welsh	59	Aberdeen	Remand	Hanging
14 July 1989	Derek Wood	26	Perth	9 years	Hanging
26 July 1989	Philip McVeigh	22	Shotts	2 years	Hanging
3 December 1989	William Diffin	18	Polmont	3 months	Hanging
1990					
9 June 1990	Edward Ronald	30	Barlinnie	Remand	Hanging
31 July 1990	Robert Wilson Campbell	39	Barlinnie	Life	Hanging
26 September 1990	Archibald McCallum	25	Barlinnie	Remand	Self strangulation
1991					
3 January 1991	Raymond Langlands	34	Perth	2 years	Hanging
25 January 1991	Thomas McDougall	27	Greenock	3 months	Hanging
28 July 1991	Thomas Hutchison	32	Barlinnie	60 days	Hanging
23 September 1991	Ernest M. S. Craig	19	Longriggend	Remand	Hanging
1992					
11 February 1992	Steven Greig	19	Polmont	Remand	Hanging
27 February 1992	John Galbraith	31	Barlinnie	30 days	Hanging
22 March 1992	Peter Nichol Goldie	19	Polmont	5 months, 4 months, 3 months c/c	Hanging

Date	Name	Age	Establishment	Sentence or remand	Determination
15 June 1992	Richard Simon Lowe	26	Edinburgh	3 years	Hanging
9 July 1992	Syrup Metha Ullah	37	Edinburgh	5 years + 5 years c/c	Hanging
25 August 1992	Philip Goulding	31	Dumfries	Remand	Hanging
3 September 1992	William McLeod	28	Edinburgh	Remand	Hanging
18 October 1992	Anthony Shivers	25	Barlinnie	Remand	Hanging
2 November 1992	John Sime	45	Edinburgh	Remand	Hanging
1993					
13 January 1993	Stewart Sawyers	23	Greenock	Remand	Hanging
7 April 1993	Robert Greer	28	Perth	Life	Hanging
22 August 1993	George Fleming	45	Edinburgh	Remand	Jumping
20 September 1993	Thomas Lafferty	21	Polmont	5 years	Hanging
17 December 1993	Gary McGonigle	23	Barlinnie	Remand	Hanging

c/c = Concurrent sentence.

Rent Registration Service

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in how many cases the rent review service was involved in the *(a)* private and *(b)* public sector as a result of an application for housing benefit in each of the last three years; and what are his comparable projections for the three years next.

Mr. Lang: The rent registration service makes determinations on rent levels at the request of local housing authorities, which have responsibility for administering the housing benefit scheme on behalf of the Department of Social Security. The number of such determinations, which relate to the private sector only, including housing associations, made for housing benefit purposes in each of the last three years is as follows:

	Number
1991	39,670
1992	45,690
1993	50,251

Projections for future years are not available.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many staff are employed by the rent review service in Scotland;

(2) what is the present cost of running the rent review service in Scotland in each of the last five years in constant terms;

(3) how many qualified surveyors or staff with a comparable technical qualification were employed by the rent review service in Scotland at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Lang: The rent registration service in Scotland currently employes 51 staff of whom 24 undertake rent officer duties and 27 are support staff. None are qualified surveyors or staff with a comparable technical qualification.

The costs, including accommodation and other overheads, of running the service in each of the last five years at constant 1993-94 prices, are as follows:

	£ million
1989-90	2·096
1990-91	1·946
1991-92	1·987
1992-93	1·695
1993-94[1]	1·728

[1] Provisional outturn.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Talacre Beach, Clwyd

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to be able to agree the draft byelaws relating to Talacre beach, Clwyd, forwarded by Delyn borough council.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Home Office officials wrote to the Council on 2 February commenting on the latest draft of the byelaws. We expect to give provisional approval to the byelaws once the few remaining issues have been resolved.

Prison Staff Disputes

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many working days have been lost to the prison service in each of the last five years because of strike action taken by prison officers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 5 May 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about strike action taken by prison officers.

No working days were lost as a result of strike action by prison officers during the last five years.

Just before this period, there was a ten day strike by prison officers at Wandsworth from 29 January to 8 February 1989, over the introduction of new shift systems. The figure for working days lost cannot be identified but the majority of prison officers (from a total of over 300 at the establishment at the time) were involved. The prison was managed by governor grades from Wandsworth and other Prison Service establishments, other managers, police officers and prison officers who refused to take industrial action.

The other serious dispute in recent years which resulted in strike action was at Holloway in July-September 1988, over

staffing levels. The dispute ran for six weeks and over 7,000 working days were lost. The prison was run by governor grades and other staff who refused to strike.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many formally registered disputes there were in each of the last five years between the Prison Officers Association and the Prison Department; and how many of those disputes were resolved without recourse by the trade union side to industrial action.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 5 May 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about formally registered disputes with the POA in each of the last five years, and how many were resolved without recourse to industrial action.

The number of disputes or failures to agree declared under the Cubbon formula arrangements, the Disputes Procedure which replaced the formula in October 1989, and the Industrial Relations Procedural Agreement, which was introduced in July 1993, are as follows:

In 1989/90, 61 disputes were declared at 46 establishments; 30 disputes were resolved in that year.

In 1990/91, 119 disputes were declared at 77 establishments; 91 disputes were resolved in that year.

In 1991/92, 130 disputes were declared at 61 establishments; 134 disputes were resolved in that year.

In 1992/93, 38 disputes were declared at 34 establishments; 76 were resolved in that year.

In 1993/94, 139 disputes (or failures to agree from 1 July 1993) were declared at 67 establishments; 88 disputes/failures to agree were resolved in that year.

The vast majority of disputes were resolved without recourse to industrial action, the aim of the procedure being to provide a mechanism to resolve disagreements through discussion as quickly as possible at the lowest appropriate level. No strike action has been taken during the last five years (the last strikes by prison officers were at Holloway in 1988 and Wandsworth in early 1989). Where industrial action took place it varied in nature from, for example, a refusal to supply payphone cards to inmates, to action restricting prisoner intake and leading to locking out in police cells.

In 1989/90 there were some episodes of less severe action, including at Canterbury, Lindholme and Wymott.

In 1990-91 industrial action took place at 12 establishments arising from local disputes and in some cases this resulted in prisoners being accommodated in police cells. Industrial action also took place at ten establishments arising from the April 1990 prison disturbances, where POA branches would not accept prisoners from outside their catchment areas.

In 1991/92 industrial action took place at 11 establishments in connection with the disputes. Action at Winchester carried over into the following year and ended in June 1992. There has been no subsequent industrial action associated with disputes or failures to agree at individual establishments. There was national action, amounting to a work to rule, from 5 November 1993, until the Home Secretary obtained an interlocutory injunction on 18 November, restraining the POA from pursuing further planned industrial action, namely 'locking out' prisoners.

The threatened action would have put 1,700 prisoners in police cells in a matter of 72 hours. The disruption to the prison system, the police, the courts, prisoners, their families and legal advisers would have been very considerable, and would have filled up almost all the available police cell capacity in an unmanageably brief period. The cost to the taxpayer would have been nearly one million pounds over those three days.

Prison Disturbances

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will detail the prison disturbances which have taken place over the last 10 years to include *(a)* the nature of the damage, *(b)* the number of staff and prisoners injured and *(c)* the overall cost of the disturbance.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 5 May 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about prison disturbances over the past ten years.

Any action by two or more prisoners against the smooth running of a prison may be classed as a disturbance. Such disturbances may be either passive such as sitting down and refusing to leave the exercise yard, or active such as damaging the fabric of the prison and fighting staff.

The table below shows the number of disturbances since 1984.

Year	*Number*
[1]1984-85	38
1985-86	38
1986-87	45
1987-88	42
1988-89	67
1989-90	67
1990-91	105
1992-93	142
1993-94	147

[1] For this year only the figures are for a 15 month period.

I will write to you again about the more serious disturbances once this information is available.

Camp Hill

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department by how much he intends to cut staffing levels at Camp hill; and for what reason.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 5 May 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about staffing levels at Camp Hill prison.

There are no plans to reduce overall staffing levels at Camp Hill but the governor is considering replacing some prison officers posts with prison auxiliaries.

Deportations (Private Security Firms)

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce independent monitoring of complaints about private security firms used in deportations.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to her earlier question on this subject on 9 February 1994 at column *264*.

Police Redundancy

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce measures to require Metropolitan police officers with over 30 years' service, and who have previously refused to accept voluntary redundancy, to be made compulsorily redundant.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None at present.

Campsfield House

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans there are for Judge Stephen Tumim to inspect Campsfield house and to report to him.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend will be inviting Judge Tumim to inspect Campsfield house in due course as part of his future programme of inspections.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Departmental Publications

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster for how many regular publications he was responsible in 1993-94; what was their circulation; and how many were obtainable by subscription.

Mr. David Davis: During the financial year 1993-94 the Cabinet Office, including the Office of Public Service and Science and its executive agencies, together with the Central Office of Information and HMSO, produced 17 annual and 16 other regular publications.

I will write to my hon. Friend with details of the titles and print-runs of each publication. None of these publications is available by subscription.

Civil Service Year Book

Mr. Luff: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what procedures are followed for the authorisation of the front cover design of the "Civil Service Year Book".

Mr. David Davis: Since 1922 the front cover designs of the "Civil Service Year Book" have been approved within the Cabinet Office.

HEALTH

Junior Doctors

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many junior doctors applied for general practitioner training courses in each of the last five years; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Family Planning Clinics

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many women were seen at district health authority and trust family planning clinics in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Sackville: The numbers of women seen in England were as follows:

	Thousands
1983	1,448
1984	1,487
1985	1,454
1986	1,406
1987-88	1,319
1988-89	1,115
[1]1989-90	1,116
[1]1990-91	1,060
1991-92	1,046
1992-93	1,030

[1] Figures are estimates based on those districts providing data and relate to the number of first contacts.

Women can choose the source of their family planning advice and treatment. Guidance from the Department stresses the need for the balance of clinic and general practitioner provision to match identified local need; 98 per cent. of GPs provide contraceptive services and more than two thirds of women seeking family planning advice now see their own or another GP.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to change prescription charges exemption arrangements.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None. The existing exemption arrangements for retirement pensioners, which are the most generous in Europe, were challenged in the High Court on 26 April 1994. The court has referred the matter to the European Court of Justice and we must await the conclusion of the judicial process. It remains the policy of this Government not to impose prescription charges on state pensioners.

Nurses and Midwives

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give details of the distribution of average gross weekly earnings per person for each of the national health service clinical nursing and midwifery grades, listing the percentage of each grade earning *(a)* under £140, *(b)* £150, *(c)* £160, *(d)* £170, *(e)* £180, *(f)* £190, *(g)* £200, *(h)* £210, *(i)* £220, *(j)* £230, *(k)* £240, *(l)* £250, *(m)* £275, *(n)* £300 and *(o)* those earning £300 and over in each year since 1989.

Mr. Sackville: This information will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give details of the average gross weekly earnings and make-up of pay by type or allowance for each of the clincial grades for nursing and midwifery staff in each year since 1989.

Mr. Sackville: The information will be placed in the Library. We have used full-time staff data.

Alzheimer's Disease

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions her Department has had with representatives of the pharmaceutical industry about research into new drugs for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease.

Dr. Mawhinney: As part of the day to day operations of the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme, manufacturers have kept officials in touch with progress on development and licensing of new drugs, including those for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease.

Dentists, South Yorkshire

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists in practice in South Yorkshire take *(a)* NHS patients and *(b)* private patients only, but took NHS patients until 1990.

Dr. Mawhinney: At September 1993 the number of dentists providing national health service general dental services in South Yorkshire, which includes the family health services authorities of Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield, was 481. The comparable number at 30 September 1990 was 444. Dentists are independent contractors who make their own decisions whether to accept patients under national health service arrangements.

Consultancies

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was spent by general practitioner fundholders on consultancies in the latest year for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: Such information is not available.

NHS, London

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many inquiries her Department has received about the NHS in London in each of the last 12 months.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is not possible to identify all inquiries about the national health service in London.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many former Conservative Members and agents have been appointed as chairpersons or members of the boards of National Health Service trusts; and if she will name them.

Dr. Mawhinney: Those former Conservative Members currently serving on the boards of national health service trusts are listed:

Chairmen	
Lord Hayhoe	Guy's and St. Thomas' NHS Trust
Lord Jenkin of Roding	Forest Healthcare NHS Trust
Mr. J. Lee	Christie Hospital NHS Trust
Sir Timothy Raison	Aylesbury Vale Community Healthcare NHS Trust
Mr. A. R. Favell	Tameside and Glossop Acute Services NHS Trust
Non-executive directors	
Sir Robert McCrindle	Havering Hospital NHS Trust
Sir David Price	Southampton University Hospital NHS Trust
Mrs. M. Hicks	South Warwickshire Mental Health Services NHS Trust

Information on people who may be political agents is not available centrally.

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 16 December, *Official Report*, columns *814-15*, whether she has given permission to more units to apply for national health service trust status.

Mr. Sackville: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health has given permission for a further four applications for national health service trust status. This will bring the total number of directly managed units applying for NHS trust status in the fifth wave to 12. Two further applications for mergers of existing trusts will also be subject to public consultation. An amended list which updates information which my right hon. Friend gave the hon. Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Mr. Trend) on 16 December 1993 at columns *814-15* has been placed in the Library.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the annual total cost of *(a)* remuneration and *(b)* expenses of members of the boards of NHS trusts.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health under what powers an NHS trust may make a payment to the NHS Trusts Federation by way of affiliation.

Dr. Mawhinney: A national health service trust may subscribe to the NHS Trust Federation under the powers in paragraph 16 of schedule 2 to the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate her Department has made of the cost to NHS trusts of relaunching their corporate identities on becoming trusts.

Dr. Mawhinney: No such estimate can be made from the information collected centrally.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many first, second and third wave trusts failed to meet the targets of *(a)* earning a real return on capital of at least 6 per cent. and *(b)* remaining within external financial limits in 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table. The majority of trusts had technical issues which affected their ability to meet their financial duties. This does not imply any failure in financial control. In a number of cases, the difference between actual financial performance and statutory target is deemed to be immaterial.

	1991-92	*1992-93*
First wave trusts		
Failed to meet target of earning a real return on capital of at least 6 per cent.	10	24
Failed to meet target of remaining within external financial limits	8	12
Second wave trusts		
Failed to meet target of earning a real return on capital of at least 6 per cent.	n/a	27
Failed to meet target of remaining written external financial limits	n/a	17
Third wave trusts		
None operational in the years asked	n/a	n/a

NHS Joint Ventures

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many joint ventures were entered into between the private sector and NHS bodies in each of the last five years;

what was the cost or income to the NHS from these ventures; and what measures are taken by her Department to monitor such ventures.

Mr. Sackville: Information in the form requested is not available centrally. I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 14 April at column *293* and on 3 May at columns *456-58*, and the reply I gave the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms Harman) on 2 November 1993 at columns *171-72* for the available information on private finance schemes.

The Department does not monitor private schemes centrally. However, we conducted a special exercise earlier this year to assess the progress of the private finance initiative and it is our intention to repeat this at some future date.

NHS Contracts

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimates her Department has made of the annual cost of negotiating and managing NHS contracts.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

GP Fundholders

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total cost of allowances for computer equipment for *(a)* non-fundholding general practitioners and *(b)* fundholding general practitioners for 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Sackville: The provisional total reimbursement to all general practitioners for computer equipment in 1992-93 and 1993-94 was £40·2 million and £36·5 million respectively. The apportionment of these costs between fundholders and other GPs is not available centrally.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current estimate of the additional audit cost incurred as a result of the introduction of general practitioner fundholding.

Dr. Mawhinney: General practitioner fundholders fundholding accounts are independently audited each year by the Audit Commission. The total estimated costs in the 1993-94 audit year are about £1·3 million. This is under 0·1 per cent. of budgets set.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total cost of management allowances made to general practitioner practices which became fundholders on 1 April.

Dr. Mawhinney: Management allowances are reimbursements against expenditure. Therefore, information for the 1993-94 financial year will not be available until after the year end.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total of budget underspends retained by fundholders in each region and district in 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Dr. Mawhinney: Audited underspends are held by family health services authorities on behalf of general practitioner fundholders for up to four years for reinvestment in patient care. Final audited figures for 1992-93 and 1993-94 are not yet available.

EMPLOYMENT

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 24 March, *Official Report*, column *368*, by what date he intends to place each market research report in the Library.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Market research on a number of Employment Department campaigns has been conducted. The results will be available later in May. I will send a copy to the hon. Member at that time.

Health and Safety

Ms Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many prosecutions have been brought by the Health and Safety Executive against *(a)* regions of the National Rivers Authority, *(b)* regional water companies, *(c)* regional electricity companies and *(d)* "next steps" agencies in each of the last five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information available is as follows:

(a) Regions of the National Rivers Authority (NRA).

No informations were laid during the financial years 1989-90 to 1992-93—provisional.

(b) Regional Water Companies.

One information was laid in England and Wales during the five years 1988-89 to 1992-93—provisional. The regional water councils control the industry in Scotland.

(c) Regional Electricity Companies.

The number of informations laid in England and Wales is set out in the following table:

Year of hearing	*Information laid*
1988-89	1
1989-90	2
1990-91	1
1991-92	—
[1]1992-93	9

[1] Provisional.

The information available for Scotland is as follows:

Year of hearing	*Information laid*
1988-89	—
1989-90	1
1990-91	—
1991-92	—
[1]1992-93	—

[1] Provisional.

The figures for England and Wales relate only to electricity distribution; the Scottish figures concern power generation as well.

Ms Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many prosecutions have been brought by the Health and Safety Executive against *(a)* county councils and *(b)* district councils in England in each of the past five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information available for local authorities in England is provided in the following table:

Year of hearing	Informations laid
1988-89	22
1989-90	21
1990-91	32
1991-92	21
[1]1992-93	47

[1] Provisional

It would not be possible to identify figures separately for county and district councils except at disproportionate cost.

Ms Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what research his Department has commissioned in the last two years on the relationship between working hours, rest breaks and accidents in the workplace.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No research on this specific topic has been commissioned by the Employment Department in the last two years.

Professor J. M. Harrington of the University of Birmingham institute of occupational health was commissioned last year to identify and evaluate pertinent medical and scientific literature relating to the effect, if any, of hours of work on employees' health. The Health and Safety Executive has previously commissioned the study "Shiftwork, Health and Safety—an overview of the scientific literature 1978-1990", by Waterhouse, Folkard and Minors, 1992.

Sunday Working

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received regarding proposed changes in the ability of staff in *(a)* cinema retailing kiosks, bars or restaurants and *(b)* cinemas themselves, to work on Sunday.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Cinema Exhibitors Association has sought guidance as to whether the employment measures of schedule 4 to the Sunday Trading Bill will extend to employees in cinemas selling refreshments and souvenirs.

Training Schemes

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list all Government-operated employment and training schemes and the cost of each scheme each year since 1987; the number of providers on each scheme; how much grant each provider has received each year since 1987, in total and each year; the average payment to the providers for each person engaged on the schemes; the average payment to providers on North Norfolk Action and the cost of providers in total for each of the workstart schemes and per person who has found full-time employment on each workstart scheme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. G. Johnson to Sir Ralph Howell, dated 5 May 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question about Government operated employment and training schemes. I am replying in absence of the Chief Executive.

The Government has operated a large number of employment and training schemes over the period covered by your question, and it has not been possible to assemble all the information required for the reply in the normal timescale. Mr. Fogden will write to you again shortly with all the details that are available, but our people have told me that some of the information that you require is not held centrally.

I am sorry that we cannot reply to your question as speedily as usual.

Pit Closures

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how the funds allocated to TECs in 1993-94 specifically for areas affected by pit closures were spent; how much remained unspent; and if the remaining funds can be spent in 1994-95.

Miss Widdecombe: Funds allocated to training and enterprise councils in 1993-94 for areas affected by pit closure were spent on additional training and enterprise measures in line with TEC plans.

The full amount allocated to TECs in 1993-94 for coal special measures was not spent because of the uncertainty surrounding pit closure dates. Unspent funds from 1993-94 have been re-allocated for TEC coal special measures in 1994-95. Planned expenditure on coal special measures in 1994-95 is around £40 million.

Part-time Work

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many part-time workers there were in each year since data was collected; and if he will also show these data reworked on a basis of full-time equivalents.

Miss Widdecombe: Information on part-time workers has been collected since 1984 and is shown in the following table. The Department does not make estimates of full-time equivalents.

Work Force in Employment: Great Britain
Seasonally adjusted

	Part-time (thousands)
1984	5,282
1985	5,404
1986	5,566
1987	5,853
1988	6,047
1989	6,394
1990	6,642
1991	6,555
1992	6,599
1993	6,656

Labour Statistics

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the destination of those leaving the unemployment register, detailing specifically the numbers and proportions going into full-time work, part-time work, training, further education, on to another benefit or into inactivity, for as many years as the figures are available.

Miss Widdecombe: Information on the destinations of those leaving the claimant count is not routinely available.

The Labour Force Survey in Spring 1993 showed that about two thirds of those who had left ILO unemployment in the previous 12 months had found employment during that period.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will show for each year since 1979 the numbers coming on to and leaving the unemployment register.

Miss Widdecombe: Information on the numbers of people joining and leaving the claimant unemployment count is available on a monthly basis from June 1983 onwards. Figures can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Schools (Injuries)

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number of serious injuries and fatalities by school in local education authority maintained schools in England and Wales investigated by the Health and Safety Executive in the last two years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 4 May 1994]:* The information available is as follows:

Year	*[1]Fatal*	*[2]Major*
1991-92	2	81
[3]1992-93	2	71

The names and locations of the schools where the fatalities occurred are listed in the table. Similar details for the investigated major injuries could be obtained and presented only at disproportionate cost.

1991-92
Ferryhill Comprehensive, Cambridgeshire
Millford Special School, Plymouth
1992-93
Coleman Primary School, Leicester
Brettenham Junior School, London

Notes to table:
[1] Fatal and major injuries to employees, self-employed people also members of the public—chiefly pupils—injured as a result of someone else's work activity.
[2] As defined under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985.
[3] Provisional.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number of serious injuries and fatalities in private or independent schools investigated by the Health and Safety Executive in the last two years; and if he will list the schools concerned.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 4 May 1994]:* The information available is as follows:

Year	*[1]Fatal*	*[2]Major*
1991-92	2	17
[3]1992-93	—	14

The names and locations of the schools where the fatalities occurred are given in the table. Similar details for the investigated major injuries could be obtained and presented only at disproportionate cost.

Gresham's School, Holt, Norfolk
Macintrye Independent School, Wingrove, Buckinghamshire

Notes to table:
[1] Fatal and major injuries to employees, self-employed people also members of the public—chiefly pupils—injured as a result of someone else's work activity.
[2] As defined under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985.
[3] Provisional.

TUPE Regulations

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what are the implications of the judgment of the European Court of Justice in the Schmidt case on Her Majesty's Government's implementation of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the 1993 guidance on TUPE;

(2) what are the implications of the attitude of Her Majesty's Government to the European Court of Justice's decision in the Schmidt case for Her Majesty's Government's policy in respect of the Rask case.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: United Kingdom courts and tribunals will take account, in appropriate cases, of the judgment in the Schmidt case, case C-392/92, and the existing case law of the Court, including the Rask judgment, in determining whether there has been a transfer of an undertaking. The Government are considering the implications of the judgment in relation to the guidance issued by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 11 March 1993, but the key requirement to look at each case on its own facts remains.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will present in tabular form the size of the working population for each of the last 30 years; and if he will divide this data into male and female workers and further subdivide the total as to whether these people work full or part-time.

Miss Widdecombe: I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Habitat Conservation

6. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further plans she has to encourage the conservation of natural habitats.

Mr. Jack: We plan to increase the range of environmental schemes available to farmers and have also issued proposals to adjust ewe and beef premium payments to discourage overgrazing.

Deregulation

10. **Dr. Wright:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals for deregulation she intends to introduce.

Mr. Soames: We are finalising our review of regulations based on public consultations. Our proposals —involving firm plans for simplification and revocation of regulations—are being published as they emerge.

17. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the future of milk quotas.

Mr. Jack: The EC legislation provides for the milk quota system to continue until the year 2000. We will be pressing for the EU Council of Ministers to debate the future of milk quotas well in advance of that date. Our preference remains for artificial quota constraints to be replaced by a market-led system which would enable producers to plan their output according to the market and their business needs.

18. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on progress towards deciding the location of the European plant breeder rights office.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The United Kingdom has submitted a formal bid to locate the new office at Cambridge and we understand that six other member states have now submitted bids.

A decision on the location of the office is expected to be taken at the June European Council.

Meat and Livestock Commission

19. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action she has taken to improve the marketing role of the Meat and Livestock Commission.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: A review of the Meat and Livestock Commission was published on 1 March and included recommendations on the MLC's marketing work.

I have asked for comments on the recommendations by 1 June.

I will then consider what action to take.

Sheep

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she is next due to attend the European Union Council of Ministers to discuss the future of the sheep sector.

Mr. Jack: The next meeting of the European Union Council of Agriculture Ministers is scheduled for 30 to 31 May. At that meeting my right hon. Friend expects to discuss the sheepmeat sector in the context of the debate on the Commission's proposals for prices and related measures in the 1994-95 marketing year.

Speedwell

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice her Department offers farmers and growers on the eradication of Veronica species, commonly known as Speedwell; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: This matter has been delegated to ADAS. I have asked the chief executive to reply to the hon. Gentleman direct.

Letter from Dr. J. M. Walsh to Mr. Gordon McMaster, dated 5 May 1994:

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has asked me to reply to your question concerning what advice the Department offers farmers and growers on the eradication of Veronica species, commonly known as Speedwell.

The genus Veronica includes a number of species of wild plant, two of which are common weeds of agricultural land. These two are:

Veronica persica ..... Common Field Speedwell
Veronica hederifolia ..... Ivy-leaved Speedwell

Speedwell is not an injurious weed as defined by the Weed Act 1959 and hence the Department is under no statutory/legal obligations with regard to its control.

ADAS, on behalf of MAFF implements a number of environmental schemes such as ESAs, and within the terms and conditions of the schemes provides husbandry advice to farmers. Such advice free at the point of delivery, i.e. to the farmer, may cover appropriate practical measures for the control of weed infestations.

ADAS independently of MAFF does of course offer a whole range of chargeable consultancy services to farmers and growers, and advice on the control or eradication of weeds would be provided where appropriate. There are no particular technical problems related to the control of Speedwell by herbicides.

Vessel Registrations

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what the effect of EEC fishing permits will be on foreign vessels registered under the British flag; and whether they will qualify as British or home country vessels.

Mr. Jack: A Commission proposal for a framework regulation on fishing permits is currently being considered by member states. For the purpose of EU fisheries legislation, vessels flying a member state's flag are treated as vessels of that nation.

Security

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the use of private detective agencies and security companies by her Department.

Mr. Jack: No use is made of private detective agencies. Private firms are employed to provide security guarding, details of which were given in my reply to the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) on 25 April 1994, *Official Report*, columns 72-73.

Fishing Limitations

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals she has made to the Fisheries Commissioner for a European days at sea limitation; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: None.

State Veterinary Service

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what dates and at what ports the state veterinary service has undertaken blanket surveillance for 24 hour periods in each of the last five years.

Mr. Soames: Blanket surveillance for 24-hour periods was introduced in May 1993 and undertaken by the SVS at the ports of Hull, Harwich, Dover, Southampton, Portsmouth, Poole and Plymouth on the following dates:

1993
May 25-26
August 12-13
November 10-11
December 2-3

1994
January 4-5
February 9-10
February 21-22

March 18-19
March 28-29
April 12-13
April 28-29

On introduction of the single market from 1 January 1993 routine inspections at these ports were replaced by random surveillance which continues.

Supermarkets (Pricing)

Mr. Denham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the pricing of agricultural goods by supermarkets.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Food retailing is a fiercely competitive business: this is helping to keep retail food prices down.

Beekeepers

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps she is taking to improve the training of British beekeepers.

Mr. Jack: On 10 March I announced new arrangements to help beekeepers maintain a healthy bee population in England.

Food Safety Directorate

Mr. Brandreth: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received concerning the work of the Food Safety Directorate; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: We receive many representations about the work of the Food Safety Directorate.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Battle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current Government position with regard to BSE in the food chain.

Mr. Soames: Measures taken in the United Kingdom since BSE was identified protect public health irrespective of the progress of the epidemic, and have been endorsed by a wide range of independent experts in this country and international organisations. The chief medical officer has publicly stated that British beef can be safely eaten by everyone.

Milk Marketing

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she expects to make a decision on the proposals for the future marketing of milk by Milk Marque.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry).

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what reforms of the CAP are being promoted by Her Majesty's Government:; and what reduction in the cost of the CAP such reforms would bring about.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I will continue to press for the reform process begun in 1992 to be extended to the unreformed sectors such as sugar, wine, olive oil and fruit and vegetables.

I will also press for further reductions in support prices to the benefit of both taxpayers and consumers.

Fast Food

Mr. French: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment she has made of the benefits the development of fast food can bring to the British horticultural industry.

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend is assessing this and other aspects of the fast food market as part of his discussions with the catering industry aimed at improving opportunities for the sales of British produced raw materials, including horticultural products. I am undertaking a similar project on the horticultural industry.

Sheep Disease

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what were the dates of entry to the United Kingdom and the route of each consignment of sheep where caseous lymphadenitis was present, the size of each consignment and the numbers of animals infected;

(2) which consignments of sheep entering the United Kingdom from Poland and Spain since 1 January did not comply fully with the requirement to give 24 hours advance notice to the local animal health office; at what point the Ministry became aware of each consignment's arrival in the United Kingdom; and by whom and by what means this information was conveyed;

(3) what assessment she has made of whether the procedures set out in directive 90/425/EEC, as amended by directive 92/60/EEC, were fully complied with in relation to each consignment of sheep imported from Poland and Spain subsequently found to be infected with caseous lymphadenitis.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 28 April 1994]:* Information on the dates of arrival, the country of origin and the routes taken by each consignment of sheep imported into the United Kingdom from Spain and Poland since 1 January 1994 is given in my reply of 13 April to the hon. Member for Dulwich (Ms Jowell), *Official Report*, column *180*. Information on the size of each consignment, the numbers of carcasses from each consignment condemned at meat inspection due to internal evidence of caseous lymphadenitis, and whether advance notice was received in respect of each consignment is given in the table.

Directive 90/425/EEC requires, inter alia, that the veterinary authorities in each member state ensure that only those animals which satisfy the animal health and welfare requirements for intra-Community trade are permitted to be exported to other member states and that all consignments are accompanied by the appropriate health certification or other documentation laid down in EC rules. The directive also requires that member state veterinary authorities send each other messages, via the ANIMO computer system, when an official export health certificate has been issued, so as to provide advance notification to an importing member state that a consignment of live animals is on its way. Directive 90/425/EEC does not apply to imports from Poland.

As far as the recent imports of sheep from Spain are concerned, after the initial consignment, the Ministry's chief veterinary officer wrote to his opposite number in Spain about a number of deficiencies in the documentation. Subsequent consignments have been accompanied by satisfactory health certification. In addition, the Spanish authorities have given us prior notification that consignments were being despatched, as required under the provisions of directive 90/425/EEC.

Imports of sheep from Spain and Poland since 1 January 1994

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
			Carcases condemned due to internal evidence of caseous lymphadenitis:		
Date of arrival at slaughterhouse	*Country of origin*	*Size of consignment*	*(a) Full*	*(b) Partial*	*Details of notification received*
17 February 1994	Poland	289	Nil	Nil	<24 hours advance notification from slaughterhouse
8 March 1994	Poland	291	25	Nil	>24 hours advance notification from slaughterhouse
9 March 1994	Poland (*via* Belgium)	328	12	7	>24 hours advance notification from slaughterhouse
17 March 1994	Poland (*via* Belgium)	350	9	7	>24 hours advance notification from slaughterhouse
28 January 1994	Spain	243	Nil	Nil	>24 hours advance notification from slaughterhouse
15 February 1994	Spain	188	Nil	Nil	<24 hours advance notification from slaughterhouse
8 March 1994	Spain	290	8	19	<24 hours advance notification from slaughterhouse
23 March 1994	Spain	268	8	Nil	>24 hours advance notification from slaughterhouse

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food with what other sheep, or areas frequented by other animals which are not capable of being disinfected after contact, sheep from consignments infected by caseous lymphadenitis came into contact.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 28 April 1994]:* All consignments of sheep imported from Poland and Spain since 1 January 1994 were imported for slaughter and did not come into contact with other sheep until their arrival at the slaughterhouse in Birmingham. All lairage facilities in Great Britain in which any of the consignments were held en route to the slaughterhouse were required to be cleansed and disinfected after departure of the imported sheep.

Common Fisheries Policy

Mr. Gill: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what commitment has been made by the EU Council to confirm the full integration, by 1 January 1996 at the latest, of Spain and Portugal into the common fisheries policy.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* The Council adopted a declaration in the context of the Norwegian enlargement negotiations which provides for the full integration of the fisheries arrangements in the act of accession of Spain and Portugal into the general rules of the common fisheries policy. To that end, the Council is required to adopt regulations before 1 January 1995, which will enter into force by 1 January 1996 at the latest.

As I reported in my reply of 13 April to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison), *Official Report*, column *183-84*, the Fisheries Council on 12 April adopted a regulation which provides further that no changes can be made to the current rules governing Spanish and Portuguese fishing until the replacement arrangements have been set out and agreed by the Council.

Thames Cockle Fishery

Mr. Channon: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when there will be a public inquiry into the proposed regulating order for the Thames cockle fishery.

Mr. Jack *[pursuant to his reply, 17 December 1993, c. 1070]:* Arrangements have now been made for a public inquiry to be held into the proposed regulating order for the Thames cockle fishery on 12 May 1994 at the civic centre, Southend on Sea.

WALES

Agricultural Workers

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for each district council and county council areas, and for Wales as a whole, the number of *(a)* full-time farmers, *(b)* part-time farmers, *(c)* full-time agricultural tenants and *(d)* part-time agricultural tenants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The annual June agricultural census collects information on the numbers of farmers who work on holdings, including any partners or directors associated with those holdings. Data are not collected specifically in terms of agricultural tenants although information is available for those farmers, partners and directors who work on holdings where all the land is being rented and this category is included in the following tables.

The figures for Wales as a whole and for the counties, shown in table 1, are from the 1993 census. The 1993 figures for district council areas are not yet available, however the equivalent results from the 1992 census are given in table 2.

Table 1
Farmers working on holdings
Wales and by county
June 1993

County	All holdings[1] Farmers, partners and directors working: full-time	part-time	Rented holdings[1] Farmers, partners and directors working: full-time	part-time
Clwyd	3,028	1,348	440	161
Dyfed	8,344	3,755	813	286
Gwent	1,501	938	214	75
Gwynedd	3,455	1,714	638	245
Mid Glamorgan	649	397	85	50
Powys	4,870	1,888	555	212
South Glamorgan	393	225	105	60
West Glamorgan	586	388	54	26
Wales	22,826	10,653	2,904	1,115

Source: June agricultural and horticultural census, Welsh Office.
[1] Excluding minor holdings.

Table 2: Farmers working on holdings, by district, June 1992

District area	All holdings[1] Farmers, partners and directors working: Full-time	Part-time	Rented holdings[1] Farmers, partners and directors working: Full-time	Part-time
Aberconwy	439	165	109	28
Alyn and Deeside	207	108	35	15
Arfon	349	266	53	32
Blaenau Gwent	65	60	9	6
Brecknock	1,274	477	178	51
Cardiff	67	31	19	[2]—
Carmarthen	2,181	939	197	57
Ceredigion	2,269	1,043	191	72
Colwyn	660	246	100	32
Cynon Valley	70	57	9	8
Delyn	424	228	77	25
Dinefwr	1,198	513	90	29
Dwyfor	789	352	119	56
Glyndwr	1,047	432	125	50
Islwyn	79	58	10	[2]—
Llanelli	297	154	38	20
Lliw Valley	210	145	33	9
Meirionnydd	842	319	116	58
Merthyr Tydfil	51	33	9	4
Monmouth	1,041	579	157	52
Montgomeryshire	2,288	872	258	121
Neath	86	74	5	9
Newport	198	99	17	4
Ogwr	217	114	36	14
Port Talbot	44	25	[2]—	[2]—
Preseli Pembrokeshire	1,799	684	193	61
Radnorshire	1,192	416	117	42
Rhondda	14	12	3	0
Rhuddlan	120	55	27	9
Rhymney Valley	146	81	15	8
South Pembrokeshire	547	254	116	28
Swansea	229	132	21	11
Taff-Ely	144	79	22	10
Torfaen	97	73	23	18
Vale of Glamorgan	305	172	61	32
Wrexham Maelor	521	262	83	39
Ynys Mon	950	552	235	86

Source: June Agricultural and Horticultural Census, Welsh Office.
[1] Excluding minor holdings.
[2] Data withheld to avoid disclosure of information relating to any particular land or business.

Security

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the use of private detective agencies and security companies by his Department.

Mr. Redwood: Private inquiry agents have been used by the Welsh Office from time to time in cases of damage to trunk road furniture; personal injuries and medical negligence claims. Private security guards are employed to protect the Department's main offices at Cathays Park, Cardiff at night and at weekends.

Llandough NHS Trust

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales under what powers he has requested the Llandough national health service trust to bid to provide community health services for the Vale of Glamorgan; what other organisations have been asked to make bids for the same services; if he will publish the terms of reference to the invitation to reply; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Section 5 of the NHS and Community Care Act 1990 contains the power to make, and by implication to amend, an order establishing an NHS trust. A range of non-statutory guidance has been issued on trust-related matters, including the procedures to be followed prior to the submission of a formal proposal for NHS trust status.

I have placed in the Library of the House a copy of the letter inviting Llandough Hospital NHS trust to prepare formal proposals to extend its current range of patient care to include community and mental health services for the Vale of Glamorgan. As can be seen, I have not given my final consent to the bid so far. No other health body in South Glamorgan has been asked to prepare such proposals for this area, though all expressions of interest have been taken into account.

Employment

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many times he has met the Wales TUC to discuss employment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Since taking office, I have had two meetings with the Wales TUC, when we discussed a range of economic issues.

Milk Marketing

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what objections he has received to the revised scheme of re-organisation in milk marketing that will delay the vesting day; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and I will consider all representations made to us during consultation on the Milk Marketing Board's scheme of re-organisation. We will make our decision on whether or not to approve the scheme as quickly as our responsibilities under the Agriculture Act 1993 allow. I am not aware of any reason why vesting should be delayed beyond 1 November 1994.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 6 May 1994

NORTHERN IRELAND

Eastern Health and Social Services Board

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what purchasing contracts for health and social services boards were finalised by the Eastern health and social services board for the financial year 1994-95; what are the amounts involved; and with whom the contracts were made.

Mr. Ancram: The amounts involved in Eastern health and social services boards purchasing contracts for 1994-95 are shown below:

Provider	*Finalised amount*
Eastern board area	
Belfast City Hospital Trust	£38·975 M
Royal Group of Hospitals Trust	£47·197 M
Mater Infirmorum Hospital Trust	£11·740 M
Ulster, North Down and Ards Hospitals Trust	£38·147 M
Green Park Trust	£19·890 M
Down Lisburn Trust	£56·504 M
South and East Belfast Community Trust	£57·873 M
North and West Belfast Community Trust	£47·757 M
North Down and Ards Community Trust	£24·583 M
Eastern Ambulance Service Trust	£4·885 M
CROSS BOUNDARY FLOW CONTRACTS	
Southern board area	
Craigavon Area Hospital Group Trust	£405,727
Craigavon and Banbridge Community Trust	Extra contractual referral
Armagh and Dungannon	£21,494
Newry and Mourne Trust	£223,125
Western board area	
Altnagelvin	Not finalised
Omagh and Fermanagh	Extra contractual referral
Northern board area	
United Hospitals	Not finalised
Causeway	£102,000

EDUCATION

Teachers (Suspensions)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will institute an inquiry into the number of head teachers and other teachers suspended from schools in Cheshire in the last 12 months, and the schools involved.

Mr. Forth: As a result of concerns expressed recently about allegations against teachers, the Department is currently preparing a survey of all local education authorities to find out the number of teachers who have been suspended as a result of allegations involving pupils.

Women Teachers

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will review the information published in Statistical Bulletin 24/93 regarding teachers' responsibilities and pay scales, tables 9 to 12 and paragraphs 16 to 24, in order to identify whether women teachers in secondary schools which were grant maintained at the time of the survey appear to have had promotion prospects better than, the same as, or worse than women teachers in otherwise comparable local authority schools; what factors other than differences in experience and career break patterns account for any observed differences in pay scales between men and women teachers in grant-maintained schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: There are only relatively few self-governing grant-maintained schools in this survey, and they may not necessarily be representative of self-governing schools as a whole in this respect. However, the survey data show that women had a somewhat higher proportion of senior posts in these schools than in secondary schools as a whole.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his policy towards the promotion of equal opportunities for teachers employed in grant-maintained schools; and what arrangements he has made for monitoring known or possible inequalities between men and women teachers regarding their responsibilities and pay.

Mr. Robin Squire: The governing bodies of self-governing grant-maintained schools must comply with the provisions of equal opportunities legislation which apply to them as employers. There are no specific arrangements for monitoring inequalities between men and women teachers: however, the Department collects and publishes statistical data on teachers' pay scales and positions of responsibility from time to time, and the School Teachers Review Body may examine such aspects of teachers' conditions of employment if it sees fit.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what goals he has set for the employment of women teachers in posts of responsibility in grant-maintained schools; what relevant advice or guidance he has given to the governing bodies of grant-maintained schools; and what progress is being made towards his goals.

Mr. Robin Squire: It is not for my right hon. Friend to set such goals; appointments of teachers to posts of responsibility are a matter for the governing body of the school. The Department's guide on education law for governors of self-governing grant-maintained schools refers to the requirements of equal opportunities legislation.

Mobile Telephones and Pagers

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many *(a)* portable telephones, *(b)* pagers and electronic bleepers and *(c)* car telephones are currently used by his Department; what are the annual costs of operating this equipment; and to which personnel it is made available.

Mr. Forth: The Department currently has in use 100 portable telephones, at a total annual rental of £27,000 plus

call charges, and 66 pagers, at a total annual running cost of £26,300. The portable telephones may be used in cars if a hands-free mount is fitted. It is not feasible to quote a separate figure for car telephones. Portable telephones and pagers are issued to key personnel in the Department who may need to be contacted urgently.

Sex Education

Mr. Spring: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he plans to publish his Department's circular of guidance on sex education in schools.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend is publishing the circular today. Copies will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Byers: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what have been the costs to his Department in *(a)* providing legal advice to witnesses appearing before the Scott inquiry, *(b)* drawing up evidence to be submitted to the Scott inquiry, *(c)* officials and legal advisers attending the Scott inquiry and *(d)* other related costs.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Office of Public Service and Science has not incurred any legal costs in respect of evidence submitted to the Scott inquiry. Legal costs relating to my own evidence have been borne by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. I attended three sessions of the inquiry and was accompanied by my grade 5 private secretary. Records have not, however, been kept of the total amount of time spent by officials in preparing for, and attending, the inquiry and the cost of staff time is not therefore quantifiable. I prepared my witness statement myself during the recess.

Charterline

Mr. Thomason: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has completed an evaluation of the charterline pilot scheme.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have completed an evaluation of the charterline pilot scheme which ended on 31 March 1994. The pilot study has shown that people need more information about how to contact their public services. A number of proposals to meet this need have been identified during the charterline pilot. We are using the charterline database to work with the Royal Mail to produce a series of directories which will help people to contact their public services. We are also working similarly with BT and Thomson Directories. I do not propose therefore to continue the charterline service. In addition, we are working with organisations providing local services to produce information posters which will display helpline numbers and local information. We will continue to give priority to assisting others, such as the BBC, to develop their own helplines.

In line with the provisions of the code of practice on access to Government information, copies of the evaluation report and the research conducted before and during the pilot study have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. A copy of the evaluation report has been sent to each public service organisation participating in the pilot study.

ENVIRONMENT

Property Services Agency

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much was written off in the Property Services Agency accounts in 1992-93; broken down by *(a)* customer name and *(b)* amount; and which sums are still being pursued.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 29 April, *Official Report*, column *354* for the details of the write-offs in the PSA services 1992-93 appropriation accounts. Of the total customer debt of £76·6 million outstanding at the end of the 1992-93, £6·9 million is still being pursued.

Fire Safety

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he will take to ensure that, when advice on fire safety and fire precautions is no longer provided to Departments by the Department of the Environment, all Government Departments will continue to obtain professional advice on these matters.

Mr. Baldry: Individual Departments remain responsible for protecting against fire hazards the buildings that they occupy. It is for them to decide on the extent and the source of professional advice for particular buildings. My Department will, however, continue to provide central guidance on fire safety protection standards for Government buildings and on procedures for the management of fire safety.

Mobile Telephones and Pagers

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* portable telephones, *(b)* pagers and electronic bleepers and *(c)* car telephones are currently used by his Department; what are the annual costs of operating this equipment; and to which personnel it is made available.

Mr. Baldry: My Department currently uses 139 portable telephones, costing £44,000 per annum for line rental; 428 pagers and electronic bleepers, which cost £20,000 per annum to rent; and 15 car telephones, costing £5,000 per annum for line rental.

My Department is also responsible for 34 car telephones and two pagers and electronic bleepers which are fitted in the pool cars and associated maintenance vehicles operated by the Government car service. The annual rental for this equipment is £11,000.

The equipment is allocated to business units and not specifically to individual officers.

Urban Regeneration

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if an urban development corporation, arm's-length city challenge company, a housing action trust or the Urban Regeneration Agency may bid for the uncommitted non ring-fenced proportion of the single regeneration budget for 1995-96 and 1996-97.

Mr. Baldry: Paragraph 44 of the bidding guidance for the single regeneration budget for 1995-96, copies of

which are in the Library of the House, explains that English Partnerships—the Urban Regeneration Agency—urban development corporations and housing action trusts may join with other partners in promoting a bid for uncommitted resources from the single regeneration budget. Similarly, city challenge companies may take part in bids and, as paragraph 29 of the guidance makes clear, existing city challenge partnerships might in some cases form the basis for initiatives supported by the budget. Arrangements for the budget for 1996-97, including those relating to any uncommitted proportion of the budget, will be finalised in the light of the public expenditure settlement later in the year.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

E-Mail

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chairman of the Information Committee (1) if he will institute an experiment directed to enabling hon. Members to receive E-mail from constituents similar to that currently being undertaken by the United States House of Representatives;

(2) if he will make a statement on the feasibility of connecting the Parliamentary Data and Video Network to the Internet.

Mr. Gary Waller: The Information Committee has reported on the Parliamentary Video and Data Network —PDVN—pilot project in its first report, "The Provision of a Parliamentary Data and Video Network", HC237 of the present Session. If the House approves the establishment of a permanent Parliamentary Data and Video Network as proposed in the report, the Information Committee intends to undertake an inquiry into future additional services which might be made available to Members on the PDVN.

Parliamentary Counsel Office

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many amendments for consideration at the Committee stage of the Sale and Supply of Goods Bill were drafted by the Office of Parliamentary Counsel.

Mr. Newton: None.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many amendments for consideration at the Report stage of the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill have been drafted by the Office of Parliamentary Counsel.

Mr. Newton: Those amendments tabled on Tuesday 3 May 1994 were drafted by the Office of Parliamentary Counsel. Those tabled on Wednesday 4 May 1994 were not.

TRANSPORT

West Cost Main Line

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the amount of maintenance and track renewal work to be carried out in the financial year 1994-95 on the west coast main line.

Mr. Freeman: The funds available to Railtrack this year for maintenance and track renewal are similar to 1993-94 levels. Railtrack is committed to maintaining the west coast main line in the steady state until work on upgrading starts in mid-1995. The amount of work to be carried out this year should therefore be broadly similar to that in 1993-94.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will implement the plan for investment in the west coast railway as set out by the west midlands regional rail forum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The feasibility study on the modernisation of the west coast main line currently being undertaken jointly by Railtrack and WCML Development Co. Ltd. will examine a range of investment options. The contract for the work on the line will be let in early 1995 and the work itself is expected to commence in mid-1995.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the west coast main line will be modernised; by whom; and at what cost.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend announced on 1 December that, following a feasibility study by a private sector consortium working with Railtrack, a competition will be held early next year for the contract to design, build and maintain the improvements to the line. That remains the timetable. The feasibility study is under way. Work is expected to start in mid-1995 and to take eight to 10 years. The cost has been estimated at between £400 million and £600 million.

Rail Privatisation

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what will be the criteria for allocating rolling stock by the three proposed leasing companies.

Mr. Freeman: There will be a number of criteria. The most important are the suitability of rolling stock to the route and to meet the service specified by the Franchising Director. The final allocation of stock will be a matter for negotiation between the rolling stock company and the passenger train operator.

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much investment he estimates will be required to prepare the rail network for privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: Investment in the rail network has been geared to the maintenance and improvement of service standards and has been running at historically high levels in recent. years. Investment levels of around £3 billion announced last November for the three years from 1994-95 continue to support these objectives.

Driving Standards Agency

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when assistant chief driving examiners in the Driving Standards Agency were made equivalent in grade to senior executive officers; when the agency made this decision; when the appropriate trade unions were consulted; what powers within the agency's framework document were invoked to make this decision; and if senior executive officers will be eligible for assistant chief driving examiner posts.

Mr. Key: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Driving Standards Agency under its chief executive, Dr. John Ford. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from John Ford to Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, dated 4 May 1994:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your question about Assistant Chief Driving Examiners and Senior Executive Officers having equivalent status.

The Assistant Driving Examiner grade was established many years ago, and has always been on a comparable pay scale to that for the Senior Executive Officers, and is therefore classed as an equivalent grade. The pay scales were set at national not at Agency level and the relevant trade unions were consulted during negotiations. The Agency has followed the Departmental line on this issue and has not therefore had to invoke any powers within its framework document.

Lateral transfers of staff between jobs in different disciplines, of roughly equivalent levels are provided for in Civil Service terms and conditions as set out in the Staff Handbook. Therefore Senior Executive Officers would be eligible to be considered for Assistant Chief Driving Examiner posts, although training in the specialist aspects of the driving test would be required.

Night Flights

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he has reached a decision on the night flying restrictions to apply at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted from 23 October 1994; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The proposals that I published on 10 November 1993 for revised night flying restrictions covered the arrangements for the 1994 summer season and those to apply from winter 1994-95 until the end of the summer 1998 season. We acknowledged the need for an early decision on the 1994 summer season by separating the proposals in the consultation paper and our conclusions for that season were announced by my hon. Friend, and my noble Friend on 1 February. The summer season commenced on 27 March and continues until 23 October. The conclusions that I am announcing today apply to the following four years.

Our November consultation paper proposed that there should be a movements limit for each airport with the quota system based on the noise certification of aircraft also applying as a supplementary control. An alternative approach was also set out which would dispense with the need for quotas but impose subsidiary limits on movements by the noisier types of aircraft. As in respect of summer 1994, the responses for the following four years showed very little support for this alternative approach. I have therefore concluded that the night restrictions should continue to be in the form of movements limits supplemented by quotas. The classification of aircraft according to the quota count system, the hours of the night restrictions and the night quota period will remain as I announced on 6 July 1993.

The night-time movements limits and quotas for each airport for each season will be:—

Winter	*Movements Limit*	*Quota*	*Summer*	*Movements Limit*	*Quota*
Heathrow					
1994-95	2,550	5,000	1995	3,250	7,000
1995-96	2,550	5,000	1996	3,250	7,000
1996-97	2,550	5,000	1997	3,250	7,000
1997-98	2,550	5,000	1998	3,250	7,000
Gatwick					
1994-95	3,000	6,820	1995	8,050	9,550
1995-96	3,750	6,820	1996	9,100	9,550
1996-97	4,500	6,820	1997	10,150	9,550
1997-98	5,250	6,820	1998	11,200	9,550
Stansted					
1994-95	4,640	3,000	1995	6,750	4,200
1995-96	4,820	3,000	1996	7,000	4,200
1996-97	5,000	3,000	1997	7,000	4,200
1997-98	5,000	3,000	1998	7,000	4,200

The quotas for Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted remain as I announced on 6 July 1993. The movements limits for Heathrow and Gatwick are as proposed in the November 1993 consultation. The Stansted movements limits that I am announcing for the first three seasons are slightly lower than those proposed, as was the movement limit for this summer announced on 1 February. I also confirm that the movements limits and quotas for Stansted have been set in the light of the present limit of 78,000 passenger air transport movements—ATM. I will review both the movements limits and the quotas if Parliament should approve an increase in the Stansted ATM limit before summer 1998.

The 10 per cent. end-of-season flexibility, with penalty for excess thereafter, will apply, as proposed, to the movements limits as well as to the quotas. The arrangements for dispensation also continue to apply. Experience of operating under the guidelines published on 6 July 1993 has shown the need for some minor amendments. These do not change the circumstances in which a dispensation might be considered but provide some further clarification for operators. I have placed a copy of the revised guidelines in the Library.

I have given careful consideration to the responses from people living around the three airports, the local authorities, environmental groups and local organisations and other representative bodies. I have also given careful consideration to the responses from airlines, aviation bodies and other user organisations. In general, the responses were more polarised than hitherto, reflecting not just the particular interests of those putting them forward but also, I am sure, the length of time for which we have been debating the issues. My aim is still to strike a fair balance between the different interests: to protect local people from excessive aircraft noise at night without unnecessarily impeding the airline industry. The movements limits and quotas that I have announced today for the three airports should achieve this. However, as explained in the November 1993 consultation paper, there are difficulties in setting appropriate movements limits several years ahead. I therefore confirm that, as proposed, the

Government will be prepared to consider adjustments to the movements limits prior to 1998 in the light of advice from the airport consultative committees.

I fully acknowledge that aircraft noise at night may disturb the sleep of some people near airports and that it is a matter of concern to many others who fear that they might be disturbed. However, a complete ban on night flights could not be justified. For many years, it has been the Government's policy to allow night operations to continue while seeking to ensure that eventually all such operations would be carried out by quiet types of aircraft. In my announcement on 6 July last year I drew attention to the great strides that had been made by the industry in phasing out older, noisier aircraft and to the regulations to ensure the phasing out between 1995 and 2002 of what are now described as the noisier chapter 2 jets. Those are aircraft once regarded as quiet.

The arrangements that I have confirmed today continue the policy of encouraging the use of the most modern and quietest types of aircraft. This will permit some increase in movements provided that the quietest types of aircraft are used but the noise quotas will keep overall night noise levels well below those for summer 1988 at Heathrow and Gatwick. The movements limits provide overall control on the number of movements at night. I understand the worries expressed by local people that substantial growth of the number of movements, irrespective of the noise performance of the aircraft concerned, might bring additional disturbance from the ground operations associated with those aircraft. I therefore indicated in the November 1993 consultation paper that we were considering whether to initiate a new study into ground noise at airports at night to see whether further measures of amelioration or control might be appropriate. This has been generally welcomed. I therefore confirm that I have asked my officials to consider further with BAA plc, which is responsible for measures to control ground noise at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted, the scope and form that such a study might take, and to present proposals to me by the end of this year.

I also confirm that the monitoring and reporting arrangements announced on 6 July 1993 and 1 February 1994 are under way. These are being overseen by the Department's aircraft noise monitoring advisory committee and comprise

(a) a review of the longstanding departure noise levels of 102 PNdB (night) and 110 PNdB (day), 89 and 97 dBA respectively;
(b) the monitoring of noise performance of aircraft covered by the QC classification;
(c) reports by each airport to their consultative committee on all night movements, whether covered by quota, or by exempt types of aircraft, or granted exemptions or dispensations;
(d) suitable confirmation that the reporting arrangements cover the full audit trail;
(e) an initial report by ANMAC on the performance of the new night restrictions system after the first year of operation.

Birmingham Northern Relief Road

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of *(a)* northbound and *(b)* southbound traffic on the A34-A5 corridor parallel to the proposed Birmingham northern relief road is long distance; and what is the total amount of traffic on the Birmingham northern relief road that is expected to be long distance in 1996 and 2011.

Mr. Key: The question relates to matters which are the responsibility of the Highways Agency; the chief executive will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Dr. Tony Wright, dated 5 May 1994:

You asked the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of (a) northbound and (b) southbound traffic on the A34-A5 corridor parallel to the proposed Birmingham Northern Relief Road is long distance; and what is the total amount of traffic on the Birmingham Northern Relief Road that is expected to be long distance in 1996 and 2011. As this is an operational matter for the Highways Agency, I have been asked to reply.

The Traffic Model used by Midland Expressway Limited indicates that there are negligible numbers of vehicles using the A34 from Walsall to Churchbridge which then pass along the A5 to either Gailey (M6 J12) or Weeford. This model provides the basis for the traffic figures included in the Statement of Reasons for this scheme, a copy of which was sent to you recently. Full documentation of the model was published in February and is available to the public. I can arrange for a summary to be sent if you require one.

But the A34/A5 route is not a close parallel to BNRR and you may be interested in traffic flows on the A38/A5 route which does more closely parallel the Birmingham Northern Relief Road.

Current daily traffic flows in the A38-A5 corridor vary between 25,000 and 50,000 vehicles a day depending on which sector is looked at. Only a small proportion, some 2,750 vehicles, travelling over the entire length between Bassetts Pole and Churchbridge have an origin and a destination beyond the corridor. Of this traffic approximately 1,250 vehicles are southbound, 1,500 northbound.

Long distance traffic which uses other trunk routes into this corridor, and which could use BNRR for part of its journey, is also present; for instance vehicles travelling from north of Fazeley to Churchbridge and beyond.

Should BNRR be built, two way flows of through trips (that is traffic between with an origin and destination outside the conurbation) are estimated at 19,500 vehicles per day in 1996 rising to some 33,000 per day in 2011. More details of traffic flows are given in the Statement of Reasons.

There are no known material differences in flows between northbound and southbound traffic although at peak hours there will be considerable differences in the local flows and hence in the proportions of traffic represented by these long-range vehicles.

Motorways

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of motorway in England and Wales were coned off in *(a)* October 1992 and *(b)* March 1994.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. The chief executive has written to the hon. Gentleman.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. George Howarth, dated 5 May 1994:

You recently put down a Parliamentary Question asking how many miles of motorway in England and Wales were coned off in October 1992 and March 1994. As this is a matter for the Highways Agency, I have been asked to reply.

On 1 October 1992, 106 miles of motorway in England were coned off. On 1 March 1994 the figure was 139 miles. I do not have any figures for Wales since the Agency is not responsible for these roads.

The closure figures represent about 6% and 8% respectively of the total motorway network. But the nature of maintenance works is such that the figures can fluctuate from month to month throughout the year.

TREASURY

Security

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the use of private detective agencies and security companies by his Department.

Mr. Nelson: No private detective agencies are used by the Treasury. Information relating to the use of security companies was included in the answer that my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General gave to the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) on 21 April 1994, *Official Report*, columns *596-97*.

Coinage System

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes he is considering to the coinage system.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have asked the Royal Mint to undertake a public consultation exercise on the possible introduction of a £2 coin for general circulation and also on whether the 50p coin should be replaced with a smaller coin.

The Royal Mint will consult as widely as possible and will seek the views of the general public as well as those of special interest groups and major coin users.

Mobile Telephones and Pagers

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many *(a)* portable telephones, *(b)* pagers and electronic bleepers and *(c)* car telephones are currently used by his Department; what are the annual costs of operating this equipment; and to which personnel it is made available.

Mr. Nelson: The Treasury currently uses 23 mobile telephones, 71 pagers and electronic bleepers and seven car telephones. The total annual operating cost of this equipment is £20,300 excluding VAT and telephone call costs.

The mobile telephones are mainly used in the offices of Ministers and senior officials. The pagers and bleepers are provided to some staff whose jobs regularly take them out of their offices but who need to be contactable, for example, computer support personnel or office services staff.

Tax Relief

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what he estimates to be the total cost in 1994-95 of relief from capital gains tax for *(a)* retirement relief, *(b)* holdover relief for gifts, *(c)* relief for trading losses against capital gains, *(d)* indexation allowance and rebasing to March 1982, *(e)* exemption of first £5,800 of gains of individuals and first £2,900 of gains of trustees and *(f)* gains accrued but unrealised at death.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 28 April 1994]:* Provisional estimates for the costs of the reliefs, allowances and exemptions for 1994-95 are given in the table.

	Cost for 1994-95 (£ million)
a. Retirement relief	65
b. Holdover relief for gifts	50
c. Relief for trading losses against capital gains	85
d. Indexation allowance and rebasing to March 1982 (individuals and trusts only)[1]	1,100
e. Exemption of first £5,800 of gains on individuals and first £2,900 of gains on trustees	450
f. Gains accrued but unrealised at death	500

[1] Company figures are not available.

These estimates are the costs of the present reliefs and do not represent the yield from abolition of the relief: consequential behavioural effects could substantially alter the yield. These figures are all tentative and subject to a wide margin of error. All figures relate to individuals and trusts only and exclude gains made by companies who pay corporation tax on their gains.

Inheritance Tax

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was *(a)* the total value and *(b)* the number of estates, notified for probate in the latest available year where the net estate was valued at £1 million or over and no inheritance tax was paid.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* Exemption from inheritance tax applies to certain transfers, for example between husband and wife and to charities. Relief is also allowed in respect of certain agricultural property and business assets in order that family farms and businesses can be passed on.

Provisional estimates for estates applying for grants of representation where death occurred in the financial year 1990-91, and where the net estate was valued at £1 million or over are given below. Figures for more recent years are not available.

	Number
Number of estates applying for grants of representation	743
Number of estates not taxed	226
Total net estate value of estates not taxed (£ million)	490

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update the answer to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), *Official Report*, 15 March 1991, columns *700-1*, on capital transfer tax and inheritance tax.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 29 April 1994]:* Latest available estimates for capital transfer and inheritance tax for 1993-94 and 1994-95 are as follows:

	Estimate
Reduction, compared with indexed 1978-79 regime is:	
Total liability (£ million)	
1993-94	770
1994-95	820
Average liability[1] (£)	
1993-94	11,400
1994-95	11,800
Taxpayer numbers (thousands)	
Indexed regime	
1993-94	68
1994-95	69

	Estimate
Present regime	
1993-94	20
1994-95	21

[1] The reduction in the average liability is calculated using estimated numbers of taxpayers under the indexed 1978-79 regime.

These estimates are based on the estimated number and value of taxable estates passing on death in 1993-94 and 1994-95 under existing rules and make no allowance for any impact which the indexed 1978-79 tax rate schedule would have on the level of taxable estates.

WALES

Deer (Tuberculosis)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by region the number of cases of tuberculosis in deer in each year since 1985.

Sir Wyn Roberts: There has been one notified outbreak of bovine tuberculosis in deer in Wales since 1985. It occurred in Dyfed in 1988.

Examinations

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a comparable table of the standards of each GCSE examining board covering pupils in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not available.

Concessionary Travel

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning concessionary travel for pensioners in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: No.

Sheltered Housing

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has for the building of sheltered housing in Alyn and Deeside.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I expect Housing for Wales and the local authority to ensure that an adequate supply of sheltered housing is available. Housing for Wales plans, to complete six category 1 units for elderly people during 1994-95; the local authorities' plans are set out in their "Housing Strategy Operational Plan", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Housing Defects

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet community and town councils and tenants' associations in Alyn and Deeside to discuss investment to combat damp and cold conditions and defective doors and windows.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Such investment is a matter for the district council which determines local priorities within the resources that it has available.

Hospital Beds, Clwyd

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with health trusts in Clwyd concerning acute beds in hospitals.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Welsh Office health department officials have met the Wrexham Maelor NHS trust about its proposals for estate rationalisation on the Wrexham Maelor hospital site.

Internet

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans his Department has *(a)* to utilise the Internet, *(b)* to make available on the Internet press releases and other departmental information which the public may wish to have access to and *(c)* to use the Internet as a means of increasing the openness of his Department.

Mr. Redwood: My Department is considering the use of the Internet and other electronic services initially for the transmission to non-media outlets of press notices. The possibility of including other departmental information would be considered after this first stage.

Wind Farms

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has had regarding wind farms in Wales; what is the nature of these representations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Since 1991, I have received 91 representations in favour of wind farm developments, two of which included petitions with 10 and 60 signatures respectively, and 291 representations against developments, one of which included a petition with 879 signatures.

Sheep Scab

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what specific proposals he has to reduce the incidence of sheep scab in Welsh flocks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: A number of representations have been made calling for the Government to impose statutory controls in respect of sheep scab. However, this is a disease which can be controlled readily by individual farmers, who are well aware of the preventive measures and procedures needed to deal with it. The Agriculture Departments have produced a guidance leaflet on how to safeguard against sheep scab and what to do if the disease is suspected. Veterinary field staff will also continue to watch for welfare problems at markets and on-farm and will be alert for cases of distress caused by sheep scab. We shall not hesitate to press for suitable action to be taken under animal welfare legislation against those who cause serious welfare problems by not dealing promptly and satisfactorily with outbreaks of sheep scab in their flocks.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Nuclear Safety

Mr. Burns: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the guidance to the Health and Safety Commission on the exercise of its responsibilities for co-ordinating certain nuclear safety research programmes will be revised.

Mr. Eggar: I wrote to the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission recently agreeing a revision to the guidelines issued originally by the Secretary of State for Energy in 1989. The guidelines have been expanded to include research relevant to any activity or process associated with operation or decommissioning of nuclear power systems on a United Kingdom licensed site. Other changes take account of the changes in the status of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, European Union procurement rules and departmental responsibilities.

A copy of the revised guidelines has been placed in the Library of the House. Copies have also been sent to Her Majesty's chief inspector of nuclear installations, and the chairmen of Nuclear Electric plc, British Nuclear Fuels plc, and Scottish Nuclear Ltd.

Strategic Technology Acquisition

Mr. Davidson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the progress made to date in creating a national strategic technology acquisition plan.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* The Government adopted the technology priorities of the aviation committee's national strategic technology acquisition plan for civil aeronautics in July 1993. This plan is important in helping to identify and prioritise the research effort that may need to be taken in industry and through publicly funded programmes—and to bring about better complementarity and relevance of the latter including DTI, defence, science base and Community programmes. DTI has just completed a number of pilot exercises which are being evaluated.

Trade Associations

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will introduce legislation to protect the consumer against the setting up of unrepresentative or bogus trade associations.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 4 May 1994]:* No, the consumer is already protected by a wide range of legislation such as the Trade Description Act 1968, the Consumer Protection Act 1987 and the Sale of Goods Act 1979 which, among other things, provide remedy against misleading or false representation in the supply of goods and services.

Urban Policy Initiatives

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list every urban policy initiative that has been instituted or operated since 1979, the date that each scheme began operating, where appropriate the date that the scheme ceased operating and the funds available on an annual basis under each scheme.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 5 May, *Official Report*, column *608*.

HEALTH

Patient Statistics

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average length of stay in hospital for *(a)* all patients and *(b)* patients in surgical specialties in each year since 1988-89.

Mr. Sackville: The average length of stay figure relates to in-patients who use a hospital bed for at least one night. They exclude day cases, although procedures previously requiring a short stay in hospital are increasingly undertaken on a day basis. The proportion of finished consultant episodes which were day cases is also shown in the table.

Year	*All specialties*		*Acute sector*		*Surgical acute*	
	Average length of stay	*Percentage day cases*	*Average length of stay*	*Percentage day cases*	*Average length of stay*	*Percentage day cases*
1989-90	18·5	13·5	6·2	16·6	5·4	21·1
1990-91[1]	15·6	14·4	6·0	17·7	4·8	22·7
1991-92[2]	13·0	16·6	5·7	20·4	5·0	25·8

[1] Provisional.
[2] Preliminary estimate.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the NHS trusts that came into effect from April 1993 which have held no meetings of the board in public.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that the Under-Secretary of State my right hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) gave him on 25 April at columns *65-66*. No public meeting is required for such trusts before 30 September 1994.

Health Trusts, South Yorkshire

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the names and full-time occupations of all the non-executive directors appointed to health trusts in South Yorkshire.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 17 January at column *385*. The following amendments apply.

Doncaster Royal Infirmary & Montagu Hospital NHS Trust
Chairman
Formerly: Mr. C. Bryant
Now: vacant

Non-executive directors
Formerly two vacancies
Now: Mr. J. Pickup—Chartered surveyor
Mrs. E. Sparrow—Business services consultant

Sheffield Children's Hospital NHS Trust
Non-executive director
Formerly: vacancy
Now: Mrs. B. Wright—Former Matron

Out-Patient Appointments (Cost)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average cost of an out-patient appointment in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Sackville: The average cost of an out-patient appointment in 1991-92 was £54·18. The figure is derived from the annual financial returns completed by health authorities and national health service trusts. It includes overheads and capital charges. Information for earlier years was not collected on a comparable basis.

Ritual Abuse

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what communication she had with the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill regarding the publication of Professor La Fontaine's report on ritual abuse; when this communication took place; when the report was made available to the Press; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what is her timetable for the publication of Professor Jean La Fontaine's report on ritual abuse; and if she will make a statement;

(3) what considerations led to the selection of an anthropologist to produce a report on ritual abuse; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: A report of the main findings of Professor La Fontaine's survey into the extent and nature of organised and ritual abuse will be published shortly. Publication of her full academic book is expected in the autumn.

Professor La Fontaine's application was one of a number received. It was selected on the basis of scientific merit in the normal way, through independent anonymised peer review and consideration by the Department of Health child care research liaison group, which includes a number of independent academic and social service advisers.

Professor La Fontaine's report has not been made available to the press. Communication on this issue was by parliamentary question and answer, and I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 29 March at column *690*.

Patient De-registration

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has for changing the regulations in respect of the explanation provided to patients who are de-registered by general practitioners.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Health Care (Purchase)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the total expenditure by *(a)* NHS trusts, *(b)* regional health authorities, *(c)* district health authorities and *(d)* family health services authorities on purchase of health care from non-NHS service providers in 1992-93 and 1993-94;

(2) what was the total expenditure by NHS trusts, regional and district health authorities and family health services authorities on purchase of health care from non-NHS providers in 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Sackville: The total expenditure by national health service trusts, regional health authorities, district health authorities and family health services authorities on purchase of health care from non-NHS providers in 1992-93 is shown in the table. Provisional figures for expenditure in the year 1993-94 will be available in December 1994.

Purchaser	*£000*
NHS trusts	45,436
Regional health authorities	21,421
District health authorities	187,335
Family health services authorities	13,127

Note: The figures are provisional: the summarised accounts for 1992-93 are subject to audit by the National Audit Office.
Sources:
Annual accounts (1992-93) of FHSAs; regional and district health authorities.
Financial returns (1992-93) of NHS trusts.

Specialist Medical Training

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to ensure that the medical colleges implement her recommendations on changes to specialist medical training.

Dr. Mawhinney: In December 1993, I announced the Government's acceptance of the recommendations in the report of the working group on specialist medical training "Hospital Doctors: Training for the Future". The work needed by medical royal colleges, postgraduate deans, the General Medical Council and national health service managers to ensure successful implementation of the report's recommendations is under way. All medical royal colleges have made substantial progress in their commitment to develop curricula for structured training programmes by July this year. Copies of the report are available in the Library.

Mobile Telephones and Pagers

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* portable telephones, *(b)* pagers and electronic bleepers and *(c)* car telephones are currently used by her Department; what are the annual costs of operating this equipment; and to which personnel it is made available.

Mr. Sackville: There are 500 portable telephones, some of which are car telephones, and 460 pagers in use in the Department. The annual operating cost of this equipment is approximately £412,000. Authorised users, who are mainly medical, scientific, professional and managerial staff, represent fewer than one in five of the departmental total. These facilities are required to enable them to maintain necessary contact with the Department and the national health service when travelling or while out of normal working hours.

Pacemaker Leads

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which regional health authorities have completed the checks on patients implanted with Siemens pacemaker leads 1010T, 1050T and Prototype 93.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has not sought information from regional health authorities. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of individual RHAs for details.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Hackney

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to close Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Hackney.

Mr. Sackville: East London and the City health authority is at present undertaking public consultation on proposals for the future of hospital services for children in east London. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mrs. Frances Heidensohn, chairman of the authority, for details.

Ministerial Visits

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether journalists were present at the visit to the ambulance service on 28 April by the Under-Secretary of State for Health, the hon. Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville).

Mr. Sackville: No, the press was not informed of the visit.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list each hospital, general practitioner practice or other where health workers are employed, visited by her and members of her Ministerial team since 1 April; and which such sites it is intended to visit before 9 June.

Mr. Sackville: Health Ministers have visited the following establishments since 1 April:

Chase Farm Hospitals NHS Trust, Enfield, Middlesex
Dulwich Medical Centre, East Dulwich
Dr. Grey's Hospital, Elgin
East Grinstead Health Clinic, East Grinstead
Enfield Community Care NHS Trust, Enfield, Middlesex
Farnham Road Hospital, Guildford, Surrey
General Practitioner's Surgery, Kingston Upon Thames
General Practitioner's Surgery, Nottingham
Hayward House Hospice, City Hospital, Nottingham
Heathlands Project, Guildford, Surrey
Hillingdon Hospital NHS Trust, Uxbridge, Middlesex
Hurst Health Centre, Walthamstow, London
London Ambulance Service, Waterloo
MeathHome Mental Illness Project, Godalming, Surrey
MENCAP, Stallington Hospital, Stafford
Princess Royal Hospital, Haywards Heath
Skene Nursing Home, Elgin
Whipps Cross Hospital, Leytonstone, London
General Practitioner's Surgery, Peterborough
Peterborough Hospitals, NHS Trust
Royal Free Hospital NHS Trust
Guy's and St. Thomas's NHS Trust

Ministers will continue to make regular visits to national health service establishments in performing their official duties. A number of these visits are arranged at short notice and it is not possible to provide a comprehensive list of future visits.

Youth Treatment Service

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will publish the report of the 1993 social services inspectorate inspection of the youth treatment service and the second annual report of the youth treatment service group; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Copies of these reports have been placed in the Library today. I have accepted the recommendations in both reports and have asked the chief executive of the youth treatment service to implement them as soon as possible. This requirement is included in the "1994-95 Service Annual Plan for the YTS", a copy of which has also been placed in the Library today.

Psychotherapists

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she has any proposals to establish a national register for psychotherapists; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: We support self-regulation by the profession and have welcomed the initiatives taken by the United Kingdom Council of Psychotherapy and the British Confederation of Psychotherapists to establish their own registers.

Lumpectomies

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will seek from her United States counterpart the information he holds about the dangers of lumpectomies; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Decisions on treatment protocols for breast disease are matters for the professions.

Hospital Appointments, Dewsbury and Huddersfield

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is her estimate of the number of general practitioner referrals for hospital treatment who are waiting to get on the waiting list for first appointments in the Dewsbury and Huddersfield area;

(2) how many people are waiting for their first out-patient appointment with a consultant in *(a)* the Dewsbury area and *(b)* the Huddersfield area.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are no waiting lists for first out-patient appointments and no information is held centrally on the time taken between a general practitioner referral and first appointment. The hon. Member may wish to contact the local hospitals for details.

Community Care

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the minimum recommended frequency of visits by home helps/care assistants to people having been assessed as needing social care support in their own homes.

Mr. Bowis: The amount of support will depend on the assessed need of each individual.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether contracts with National Health Service trusts constitute contracts with the independent sector for the purpose of community care special transitional grant.

Mr. Bowis: Yes. The conditions attached to the special transitional grant define the independent sector as a body which is not owned, controlled or managed by a local authority.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Byers: To ask the Attorney-General what have been the costs to his Departments of *(a)* providing legal advice to witnesses appearing before the Scott inquiry, *(b)* drawing up evidence to be submitted to the Scott inquiry, *(c)* officials and legal advisers attending the Scott inquiry and *(d)* other related costs.

The Attorney-General: The following costs have been identified:

	£
(a) and (b)	[1]8,700
(c)	143
(d)	1,240

[1] It has proved impractical to allocate costs to (a) and (b) seperately.

The amounts in (a), (b) and (c) do not include the costs of staff in the Treasury Solicitor's Department which have been charged to client departments or the costs of staff who have provided legal advice within my departments in the normal course of their duties.

PRIME MINISTER

Friendly Governments

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister when Her Majesty's Government introduced the practice of not commenting on the policies of other friendly Governments; and if he will list those Governments Her Majesty's Government regard as friendly.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) on 31 March, *Official Report*, column *908*.

Health Service Visits

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list each hospital, general practitioner practice or other national health service site *(a)* he has visited since 1 April and *(b)* which he plans to visit before 9 June.

The Prime Minister: I have made one visit, to Basildon hospital on Tuesday 5 April. No other visits are planned before 9 June.

Civil Servants (Business Appointments)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Prime Minister how many civil servants in his Department applied in each year since 1986 through the business appointments system to take up an outside appointment *(a)* as an independent consultant, *(b)* in a firm of consultants and *(c)* in other employment; how many were referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments; and how many were granted.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* The information for the areas covered by the Cabinet Office and the Office of Public Service and Science votes is set out in the table.

Year	*Number of applicants*	*Independent consultants*	*Firm of consultants*	*Other*	*Referred to committee*	*Granted unconditionally*	*Granted subject to conditions*
1986	2	—	—	2	1	1	1
1987	3	—	—	3	3	3	—
1988	6	—	—	6	6	—	6
1989	3	1	—	2	1	3	—
1990	5	—	1	4	3	4	1
1991	7	—	1	6	5	7	—
[1]1992	2	1	1	—	—	2	—
1993	5	2	2	1	—	5	—

[1] In 1992 the Cabinet Office took on responsibility for the science functions of the former DES and the Treasury businesses (Her Majesty's Stationery Office; Central Office of Information; Chessington Computer Centre; and the CCTA.

Pakistan

Mr. Cox: To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to meet the Prime Minister of Pakistan to discuss matters of interest to Pakistan and the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 5 May 1994]:* I hope to meet the Prime Minister of Pakistan again later this year.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Tuberculosis (Prisons)

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners in England and Wales have been diagnosed in each of the past five years as having tuberculosis; in how many cases the disease was judged to be in its infectious stage; in how many cases it is judged that infection took place in custody; and if he will make a statement about the Prison Service's policy in this regard.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 6 May 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to respond to your recent Question on tuberculosis in prisons.

Records of the number of prisoners in England and Wales who have required "treatment or special precautions" for active tuberculosis are recorded by prison medical officers and are reported to Prison Service Headquarters on an annual basis. The figures for the last four years are as follows:

	Numbers
1988-89	22
1989-90	11
1990-91	13
1991-92	13
1992-93	28

In all of the cases the disease was judged to be in its infectious stage. Because of the capacity of this infection to become active after years of dormancy and because of the very variable

incubation period prior to manifest illness, it is not possible to determine how many of these cases of infection have taken place in custody.

The Prison Service recognise tuberculosis as a re-emerging problem. The Director of Health Care for prisoners has issued guidance to prison doctors reminding them of the need to undertake careful screening and examination of prisoners on first reception with tuberculosis and other infectious diseases in mind. Further detailed guidance specific to tuberculosis has been prepared in consultation with the Department of Health and the Tuberculosis Sub-Committee of the British Thoracic Society, and has been issued to prison doctors together with separate advice to prison staff relating to occupational health.

Executive Release Powers

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the maximum number of prisoners currently in prison who would qualify for release should the Home Secretary choose to exercise the powers of executive release granted to him by the Criminal Justice Act 1992.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Secretary of State for the Home Department has powers under section 32 of the Criminal Justice Act 1982 to order that persons who are serving a sentence of imprisonment, other than imprisonment for life or an offence detailed in schedule 1 to the Act, may be released earlier, but not more than six months earlier, than they would otherwise be so released.

Provisional information on the population at the end of December 1993 shows that if the Home Secretary were to invoke such powers up to about 9,000 prisoners would be eligible for release.

Stasic Chrenowski

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether Stasic Chrenowski, also known as Stanislaw Chrzanowski, a resident in the United Kingdom, is being investigated by the police for wartime Nazi crimes against humanity; what is the current state of the investigation; and if the information which has come into the public domain has been referred to the appropriate unit of the police who are investigating these wartime crimes.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The investigation of allegations against possible war criminals living in England and Wales is the responsibility of the Metropolitan Police war crime unit. It would not be appropriate for me to comment on any case which may be the subject of an on-going police investigation.

Prisoners (Assaults)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many assaults by prisoners on other prisoners have occurred in each of the past five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 6 May 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question asking how many assaults by prisoners on other prisoners have occurred in each of the past five years.

The information you have requested is published in the Prison Service Corporate Plan for 1994-97. For ease of reference the information requested, including the updated provisional figures for 1993-94, is given in the table below.

Assaults[1] on prisoners 1989-90 to 1993-94

Year	Number
1989-90	1,932
1990-91	1,912
1991-92	2,007
1992-93	2,062
[2]1993-94	2,437

[1] Proved at adjudication, including any attempted assaults and inciting and assisting other prisoners in an assault.
[2] Provisional figures.

Pregnant Prisoners

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what advice is given on security to staff escorting pregnant prisoners to and from court and to and from hospital facilities;

(2) if he will now review security procedures applicable to women giving birth while in prison custody; and if he will make a statement;

Mr. Peter Lloyd: *[holding answer 4 May 1994]:* Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 6 May 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about the Prison Service's security policy for women under escort who are in labour or pregnant.

The general guidance on security applies equally to both sexes. The principal means of ensuring security on escorts is through the use of handcuffs or the closeting chain. The guidance gives discretion to governors to handcuff a woman when escorting her outside the prison is there are reasonable grounds for believing that she is likely to pose security or control problems.

When any prisoner is escorted to hospital under restraint, the guidelines allow the handcuffs to be removed with the authorisation of a governor or Principal Officer and require them to be removed at the point where treatment begins if the doctor so requests. In such cases the escorting officers are expected to try to maintain security by other means, such as blocking potential escape routes.

We have reviewed the guidance in the light of the recent case where a prisoner's handcuffs were not removed while she gave birth, but believe it remains appropriate. The guidance enables senior staff at the prison to consider each case in the light of the circumstances. It also makes it clear that the handcuffs must be removed in any case if the doctor treating the patient so requests.

It is clear that the local arrangements in this particular case did not work satisfactorily. The procedures at the establishment have been reviewed and more detailed instructions will be given to escorting staff in future. I have apologised to Mrs. Edwards.

Advice on the procedures for escorting prisoners is given in the Manual on Security, copies of which are in the Library.

Prison Statistics

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prison auxiliaries and civilian grades have been employed at each prison establishment in each of the last five years;

(2) what is the proportion of *(a)* male and *(b)* female prison officers who are aged (i) 18 to 24 years, (ii) 25 to 40 years, (iii) 41 to 55 years and (iv) over 55 years;

(3) if he will list the number of assaults on prison officers, and the rate of assaults on prison officers per 100 prisoners, at each prison establishment in England and Wales;

(4) how many working days in each of the last 10 years have been lost to the prison service because of assaults on staff;

(5) at what prison establishments creche facilities are provided for staff; and what are his plans to provide such facilities in the future;

(6) how many prison officers work in the prison service of England and Wales; in what establishments they work; and at what grade;

(7) how many people from the ethnic minorities work as *(a)* prison officers, *(b)* prison auxiliaries, and *(c)* civilian works staff; and at what grade and at what establishments they work;

(8) how many women prison officers currently work in the prison service; at what establishments; and at what grade;

(9) how many assaults on prison officers in each of the past five years involved weapons;

(10) how many prison officers in each of the last 10 years have been medically retired following an assault:

(11) how many women prison officers have been physically or sexually assaulted in each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Brian Landers to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated May 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Questions asking for a breakdown of Prison Service staff by age, sex, grade and ethnic origin, and about assaults. The information you requested is set out in tables which have been laid in the library of the House.

Physical and sexual assault on women prison officers

Our recording of assaults does not distinguish between those on male and female staff, or between sexual and other types of assault.

Working days lost due to assault

Our information on the impact of assaults on staff is not as detailed as it might be, and we are considering the extent to which it can be improved. We do not record separately the amount of sick leave taken as a consequence of assault. Available figures for total sick leave taken per uniformed officer, for whatever cause, are 13·47 days in 1991-92, 12·75 days in 1992-93 and 13·05 days (provisional figure) in 1993-94.

Medical retirement due to assault

We do not have separate figures for members of staff who have been granted medical retirement as a result of assault, but the total numbers of Prison Officers who have been medically retired from the Prison Service since 1992 (reliable information for earlier years is not available) are 240 in 1992, 251 in 1993 and 95 in 1994 (as at 29 April).

As we have explained in our recent correspondence, we do take assaults on members of staff very seriously, and the numbers of all assaults, of whatever kind, is one of the Service's key performance indicators. Reducing violence in prisons is one of the top priorities identified in our Corporate Plan.

We endeavour to help any member of staff on long term sick leave, for whatever reason, by counselling and advice from line management or from our staff care and welfare service.

Creches in prisons

The Prison Service has one workplace nursery at Holloway prison, which is used by staff at Holloway and Pentonville prisons. It will shortly be expanding, to offer a total of 44 places.

To enable other governors to consider the need for childcare facilities for their staff, the Prison Service Guide to Setting Up a Nursery was published in 1993. This guide drew on the Service's experience in setting up the nursery at Holloway and on more general guidance issued by the Cabinet Office in 1992 on childcare in the Civil Service. A number of establishments are now surveying local demand for and feasibility of childcare facilities.

Prison Service staff in London and Croydon have access to nurseries run by the Home Office and other government departments and the Service has very recently bought five places in the British Rail network of nurseries around the country.

DEFENCE

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what have been the costs to his Department of providing *(a)* legal advice to witnesses appearing before the Scott inquiry, *(b)* drawing up evidence to be submitted to the Scott inquiry, *(c)* officials and legal advisers attending the Scott inquiry and *(d)* other related costs.

Mr. Aitken: The cost to MOD of providing legal advice to witnesses giving evidence to Lord Justice Scott's inquiry has still largely to be determined. Some bills have yet to be submitted and others are still receiving consideration within my Department. The known cost of legal advisers attending the inquiry on behalf of the MOD witnesses currently stands at £12,000. Sixty-six current and former MOD officials and Ministers have been asked to give written or oral evidence to the inquiry. They have given this evidence on a personal basis and have not been supervised by the Department in its preparation. There is therefore no central record of the time spent or cost incurred in the provision of such evidence; serving MOD officials prepared and gave their evidence as part of their official duties. The direct central cost of the provision of evidence and information from MOD to the inquiry is estimated to be £128,000, which represents the cost of the inquiry liaison unit within MOD and the costs of photocopying and general presentation of the information.

Ministry of Defence Police

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what consideration he has given to employing ex-service personnel to replace Ministry of Defence police and civilian guards; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what consideration he has given to the future financing of the Ministry of Defence police;

(3) what plans he has to introduce performance-related pay for Ministry of Defence police;

(4) what assessment he has made of the current performance of the Ministry of Defence police;

(5) what plans he has to change the arrangements for control of Ministry of Defence police operations; and if he will make a statement;

(6) what plans he has to reduce the capability of the Ministry of Defence police to deploy armed officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: As indicated in my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) on 15 December 1993, *Official Report*, columns *738-39*, a wide-ranging review is being carried out into the future

role, aims, objectives, structure and pay of the Ministry of Defence police. This review, which is continuing, has been closely co-ordinated with the defence costs study. Formal recommendations have yet to be put to Ministers.

The MDP fulfils its current duties with a very high level of professionalism and my Department has no plans to change the arrangements for control of MOD police operations. MDP will continue to be funded by my Department at levels consistent with the requirements for its services.

Training Colleges

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the total number of courses run at the Royal Naval college, Greenwich, over the past two years; how many people have participated; and from which *(a)* services and *(b)* countries they came.

Mr. Hanley: Over the past two years, 120 courses have been run at the Royal Naval college, Greenwich. There have been 2,183 participants on these courses, including 61 representatives from 30 foreign and Commonwealth countries. United Kingdom participants were from all three services, together with civilians and contractors.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is his estimate of the costs involved in closing the Royal Naval college at Greenwich and relocating the staff college to Camberley, including the costs of redundancy and relocation expenses, and of meeting the delapidation obligations at the premises currently occupied by the Royal Naval college;

(2) what is the estimate of the potential savings to his Department which could be achieved by closing the Royal Naval college at Greenwich, taking into account the redundancy and relocation expenses *(a)* on the assumption that alternative uses for the current premises can be found and *(b)* on the assumption that no such alternative use can be found and that the costs of on-going maintenance and upkeep of the buildings will continue to be met from central funds;

(3) what estimate he has made of the feasibility and cost of maintaining two service staff colleges at Camberley and Greenwich, as against the maintenance of all three current establishments;

(4) what consideration he has given to the future uses of the buildings currently occupied by the Royal Naval college at Greenwich, and the costs involved in the upkeep and maintenance of these buildings;

(5) what estimate he has made of the feasibility and cost of locating all three service staff colleges at Greenwich in the premises currently occupied by and adjacent to the Royal Naval college.

Mr. Hanley: I have given no formal consideration to these issues. Staff training in all three services has, however, been looked at as part of the defence costs study, but no decisions have yet been made by Ministers.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many people are currently employed by his Department at the Royal Naval college, Greenwich *(a)* in the supervision and management of the college, *(b)* in teaching, study and related research activities and *(c)* in the provision of ancillary and support services.

Mr. Hanley: The figures requested are as follows:

	Number
Supervision and Management	30
Teaching, Study and related Research	99
Ancillary/Support Services	[1]118

[1] Departmental staff plus approximately 150 civilian contract support staff.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate of the *(a)* direct and *(b)* indirect benefit to the United Kingdom of the attendance of overseas service personnel at courses run at the Royal Naval college, Greenwich.

Mr. Hanley: The direct benefit of overseas personnel attending courses at the Royal Naval college, Greenwich is the generation of valuable receipts; around £500,000 being generated during financial year 1993-94. The presence of international officers on courses run by the college also broadens the experience and understanding of all United Kingdom course members. The indirect benefits include the fostering and strengthening of our defence relations with friendly and allied countries through the useful exchanges of ideas and views with officers from other countries' armed forces.

Landing Platform Docks

Mr. Davidson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy in respect of the provision of ships for the British amphibious capability; and when it is expected that orders will be placed for one or more new landing platform docks.

Mr. Aitken: The Government have made it clear in the past, including in the recently published "Statement on the Defence Estimates", that they recognise the importance of an effective amphibious capabililty, and are currently making a sizeable investment in this area as a result. Progress continues on the design and construction of the landing platform helicopter, which we ordered last May. Responses to the invitation to tender for the ship life extension programme for the first of the three older landing ships logistics, RFA Sir Bedivere, are currently being evaluated. The project definition studies for the landing platform dock replacement—LPD(R)—have now been completed, and the results are being examined. We hope to be in a position to make a decision on the issue of an invitation to tender for the design and build of the first of class—LPD(R)01—later this year. Subject to the successful outcome of the competition, we would expect an order to follow during the course of next year.

Security

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the use of private detective agencies and security companies by his Department.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones), on 3 May, *Official Report*, column 474, about private detective agencies.

It is my Department's practice to employ private security companies to guard establishments where it is considered to be appropriate and cost-effective to do so.

Technology Centres

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what funds have been allocated within the Defence Research Agency to the setting up of dual-use technology centres; and what is now the programme of inauguration of such centres, and their location.

Mr. Aitken: This is a matter delegated to the Defence Research Agency under its framework document. I have therefore asked the chief executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Letter from John Chisholm to Mr. Jim Cousins, dated 6 May 1994:

In today's written answer the Minister of State for Defence Procurement said I would be replying direct to your question on dual use technology centres.

Dual-use Technology Centres (DUTCs) are one of a number of initiatives being taken by the Defence Research Agency to increase the contribution from defence research to wealth creation in the UK, in response to the 1993 White Paper on Science and Technology.

The idea behind DUTCs is to enable industry to exploit the facilities, technology, know how and teams which exist for defence research. No funds have been specifically allocated to setting up DUTCs by MOD although the research work in the centres is sponsored by the MOD and, occasionally, the Department of Trade & Industry. This provides the revenue that makes DUTCs possible. But it is left to industry to decide how to participate and how to fund its involvement.

The first DUTC covering the area of Structural Materials was established in April 1994. It aims to enable UK industry to gain more benefit from the very large expenditure by MOD on research in advanced structual materials and the combination and processing of such materials in advanced products. The Structural Materials Centre is currently spread around 11 sites but we plan to rationalise primarily into a new laboratory at Farnborough. The construction of this laboratory is funded by MOD as part of the programme of cost cutting and site closures that flowed from Options for Change and forms a key part of the DRA's rationalisation programme.

A second DUTC, the Software Engineering Centre, will be launched in May. This will aim to exploit MOD expenditure on engineering research software in order to encourage closer working between the UK software companies. This Centre will be managed from DRA Malvern but will involve many projects with multi-company teams located at DRA and industry sites.

A third DUTC is planned for the summer in the area of supercomputing. This will be a partnership between a number of UK organisations, both military and civil, aimed at providing world scale computing facilities to the DRA, its partners and other civil users.

Other DUTC opportunities are being considered in hydrodynamics and oceanography, using DRA's facilities at Haslar near Portsmouth, and in information systems and technology and electronics and opto-electronics.

Medals (Former Yugoslavia)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what rules exist regarding the wearing of medals by members of Her Majesty's armed forces which were awarded for participation in *(a)* UN missions in the former Yugoslavia and *(b)* EC missions in the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Hanley: Members of the British armed forces who meet the qualifying criteria for the United Nations medal or the European Community monitoring mission medal for service in the former Yugoslavia, may accept and wear these awards. The medals should be worn after all official British awards and medals approved by the sovereign.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Occupied Territories

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the terms of the agreement between Turkey and Israel about the supply of water from Turkey to the Gaza strip for the needs of Palestinians; and if he will send congratulations to both parties on this contribution to the peace process.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We understand that when the Israeli Foreign Minister visited Turkey in April, water was one of the main topics of discussion. It was agreed that Israel should join the Manavgat water project. However, we are not aware of any agreement between Israel and Turkey to supply water from Turkey to the Gaza strip.

Mobile Telephones and Pagers

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many *(a)* portable telephones, *(b)* pagers and electronic bleepers and *(c)* car telephones are currently used by his Department; what are the annual costs of operating this equipment; and to which personnel it is made available.

Mr. Goodlad: The number of portable telephones, pagers, electronic bleepers and car telephones presently used by the diplomatic and aid wings of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and associated annual operating costs are as follows:

FCO (Diplomatic and Aid Wings)	*FY 1993-94* £
(a) 174 portable telephones	58,663
(b) 260 pagers and electronic bleepers	44,842
(c) 3 fixed car telephones	1,032
Total	104,537

Mobile telephones and pagers are issued to Ministers, the permanent under-secretary, assistant under-secretary of state and private offices on demand; heads of department for use by duty officers; information and emergency aid department; and any officer who can justify an official need.

India

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has had from the Indian Government about their attempts to reduce the number of child workers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have not recently discussed this issue bilaterally with the Indian Government. We have urged all United Nations member states to abide by the programme of action for the elimination of the exploitation of child labour, which was agreed in 1993 by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, of which India is a member.

Sanctions (Iraq)

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposal has been put forward for Lloyd's Register of London to verify the enforcement of sanctions against Iraq through Aqaba; and how this relates to the lifting of the siege on Aqaba.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We welcome the Jordanian proposal to replace the multinational interception force —MIF—in the Gulf of Aqaba with land-based personnel from Lloyd's Register. The task of the onshore inspection regime will be the same as that of the MIF: to prevent breaches of the sanctions regime imposed on Iraq by the United Nations. Until Iraq satisfies the terms of all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions, we will continue to lend full support to efforts to enforce sanctions against that country.

Kosovo (Visit)

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reasons were given by the Serbian Government in Belgrade for forbidding a British delegation, including representatives from his Department, from visiting Kosovo; and what was the purpose of the visit.

Mr. Goodlad: No British delegation containing representatives of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has been forbidden to visit Kosovo. My right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office was in Kosovo yesterday during his visit to the Balkans.

Internet

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans his Department has *(a)* to utilise the Internet, *(b)* to make available on the Internet press releases and other departmental information which the public may wish to have access to and *(c)* to use the Internet as a means of increasing the openness of his Department.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Internet is being considered as both a communications and publishing mechanism for the dissemination of material originating from the FCO. A number of different links to the Internet, both in the diplomatic and aid wings, have already been installed.

North Korea

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the International Atomic Energy Agency has yet received full co-operation from North Korea in its request to sample and analyse fuel at the Yongbyon nuclear reactor.

Mr. Goodlad: North Korea has yet to agree to the IAEA's request to be allowed to inspect the refuelling of its reactor at Yongbyon and to ensure that the fuel rods are put under seal pending future analysis.

Middle East

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received about the agreement between Hamas and Fatah Hawks in the Gaza strip; and what are its implications for the middle east peace process.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: According to reports from the occupied territories, leaders of the military wings of Fatah and Hamas have agreed to cease settling disputes by violent means. I hope that this will lead to a reduction of violence in the occupied territories and to improve the prospects for Palestinian self-rule in Gaza.

Human Rights

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the reservations the United Kingdom has entered in respect of the European convention on human rights and the associated protocols and additions, since 1964.

Mr. Goodlad: The United Kingdom has entered the following reservations in respect of the application of protocol 1 to the European convention on human rights to certain territories for whose international relations the Government is responsible:

1. In view of certain provisions of the Education (Guernsey) Laws and of the Education Ordinance of Gibraltar, the principle affirmed in the second sentence of Article 2 is accepted by the United Kingdom only so far as it is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training, and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure in Guernsey and Gibraltar.

2. The principle affirmed in the second sentence of Article 2 is accepted by the United Kingdom only insofar as it does not affect the application of the following legal provisions:

(i) the common law of Anguilla which permits the imposition by teachers of moderate and reasonable corporal punishment;

(ii) Section 26 of the Education Act 1977 of the British Virgin Islands (which permits the administration of corporal punishment to a pupil only where no other punishment is considered suitable or effective and only by the principal or any teacher appointed in writing by him for that purpose);

(iii) Section 30 of the Education Law 1983 of the Cayman Islands (which permits the administration of corporal punishment to a pupil only where no other punishment is considered suitable or effective and only by the principal or any teacher appointed in writing by him for that purpose);

(iv) the common law of Montserrat which permits the imposition by teachers of moderate and reasonable corporal punishment;

(v) the law of St. Helena, which permits the administration by teachers of reasonable corporal punishment; and Section 6 of the Children and Young Persons Ordinance 1965 of St. Helena (which states that the right of a teacher to administer such punishment is not affected by the provisions of that section which relate to the offence of cruelty to children);

(vi) the law of St. Helena Dependencies, which permits the administration by teachers of reasonable corporal punishment; and Section 6 of the Children and Young Persons Ordinance 1965 of St. Helena (which states that the right of a teacher to administer such punishment is not affected by the provisions of that section which relate to the offence of cruelty to children);

(vii) the common law of the Turks and Caicos Islands which permits the administration by teachers of reasonable corporal punishment; and Section 5 of the Juveniles Ordinance (Chapter 28) of the Turks and Caicos Islands (which states that the right of a teacher to administer such punishment is not affected by the provisions of that section which relate to the offence of cruelty to juveniles).

No other reservations have been entered by the United Kingdom in respect of the convention or its protocols since 1964.

Rwanda

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what view was expressed by Her Majesty's Government at the meeting of the Security Council of the United Nations of 21 April where it was decided to reduce the United Nations peacekeeping presence in Rwanda.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Security Council was unanimous in adopting Security Council resolution 912 on the basis of recommendations put to the council by the United Nations Secretary-General.

In view of the absence of any ceasefire and the casualties already inflicted on the United Nations Aid Mission in Rwanda, we supported the view that the United Nations forces in Rwanda were no longer able to fulfil their mandate and that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda should be scaled down, pending further recommendations from the Secretary-General.

We also stressed the importance of retaining a United Nations presence in theatre to support the Force Commander and the Secretary-General's special representative in their efforts to secure a ceasefire and an end to hostilities.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received, directly or via the United Nations, of outside military forces, helping the rebel forces in Rwanda; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have had no such reports.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what have been the costs to his Department of providing *(a)* legal advice to witnesses appearing before the Scott inquiry, *(b)* drawing up evidence to be submitted to the Scott inquiry, *(c)* officials and legal advisers attending the Scott inquiry and *(d)* other related costs.

Mr. Goodlad: To date, the direct costs of the Scott inquiry falling to my Department have been £160,759.

It is not possible to break this figure down as set out in the question, which includes unquantifiable elements. For example, no record has been kept of the time spent by FCO officials, in London and overseas, in drawing up evidence to be submitted to the inquiry.

The direct costs can be broken down as follows:

	£
Legal advice, including attendance by lawyers at Inquiry public hearings	33,400
Copies of the daily transcripts of proceedings	3,000
Costs incurred by FCO witnesses (travel and subsistence)	19,838
Pay (FCO officials working full-time on Scott Inquiry business)	96,649
Running costs, eg office machinery, stationery	7,872
	160,759

Social Charter

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the reservations that the United Kingdom has entered in respect of the Council of Europe's social charter and its associated protocols and additions since 1964.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The United Kingdom has accepted 60 of the 72 provisions of the social charter. It has not accepted:

Article 2.1
Article 4.3
Article 7.1, 7.4, 7.7 and 7.8
Article 8.2, 8.3 and 8.4
Article 12.2, 12.3 and 12.4

The United Kingdom has not ratified the additional protocol of 1988, nor the amending protocol of 1991.

SCOTLAND

Registers of Scotland Agency

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has concerning the level of fees charged by the Keeper of the Registers of Scotland Agency; and what percentage increases there have been in the past 12 months.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Fees charged by the Keeper of the Registers of Scotland are mainly specifically listed in SI 1991 No. 2093 and these have not changed since coming into force on 16 October 1991, and where they are not so listed the keeper is required to charge fees on a full cost recovery basis.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy for ensuring competition in the supply of land registry reports to solicitors as between those supplied by the Keeper of the Registers of Scotland Agency and members of the Society of Scottish Searchers.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In principle, the policy is to encourage competition from the private sector. The Scottish Office Home and Health Department is chairing a working group involving a wider spectrum of those interested in extending access to the databases held by the keeper.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has concerning the level of charges made by the Keeper of the Registers of Scotland Agency to members of the Society of Scottish Searchers for a form 12 or 13 report; whether the same charges are being made by the keeper to his report section for similar reports supplied to solicitors; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The fees for charges in the Registers of Scotland Agency are set out in SI 1991 No. 2093 and this provides for a fee of £16.50 for each form 12 and a fee of £10 for each form 13 irrespective of whether supplied to a member of the Society of Scottish Searchers or to a solicitor.

Community Care

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to introduce a requirement that a set proportion of local authority expenditure on community care must be spent in the private sector.

Mr. Stewart: Under powers proposed in the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill it would be possible for my right hon. Friend to require a proportion of local authority expenditure on community care to be spent in the voluntary and private sectors should he consider this necessary to ensure the development of the mixed economy of care.

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the cost of implementing formal directions on purchasing in community care plans, for local authorities.

Mr. Stewart: The directions will require local authorities to include in the community care plans that they are already required to provide information which should assist more cost-effective purchasing of services.

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are his intentions for consultation with hon. Members on the draft circular on community care plans.

Mr. Stewart: In accordance with normal practice, my right hon. Friend has consulted widely among appropriate bodies on the draft circular on community care plans. It is not normal to consult hon. Members on draft circulars.

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy for ensuring adequate funding for the development of good-quality public services by councils and the voluntary sector in the provision of care in the community.

Mr. Stewart: Substantial resources are being transferred from the Department of Social Security to Scottish local authorities to meet their new responsibilities. My right hon. Friend has also made available significant additional resources to enable them to develop community care services.

Domestic Air Services

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultation took place with his Department over the proposed arrangements involving British Airways and Loganair on Scottish domestic routes; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: These proposals are commercial matters for the parties concerned, although they provided advance notice of them to the Scottish Office. The Government welcome the commitment given by Loganair and British Airways to the continuation of air services in the highlands and island which are vital to the communities that they serve.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by route the subsidies currently paid by his Department in respect of domestic air services.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Under the provisions of the Highlands and Islands Air Services (Scotland) Act 1980, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State makes subsidy available for the operation of the lifeline air service between Glasgow and Tiree and Barra. Loganair operates the service under contract to the Secretary of State. Under the terms of the contract, which is for the period 1 April 1994 to 31 March 1998, subsidy of up to £115,000 per annum is provided to Loganair.

Training

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if Scottish Enterprise is required to produce a strategic plan on how it will meet the training needs of Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: Scottish Enterprise has responsibilities for training as laid down in the Enterprise and New Towns (Scotland) Act 1990. Scottish Enterprise is currently reviewing all aspects of its present strategy including training.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what publications Scottish Enterprise has produced on how it is meeting the training needs of Scotland; and what assessment he has made of these as a reflection of Scottish Enterprise's performance in this area.

Mr. Stewart: Scottish Enterprise produces an annual report which gives details of its network's activities including the provision of training programmes for young people and unemployed adults which contribute towards meeting the training needs of Scotland.

Scottish Enterprise's performance is monitored regularly on the basis both of the performance measures in its annual report and of other management information returns to the Scottish Office.

Bosnian War Casualties

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many casualties from the war in Bosnia have been treated in Scottish hospitals.

Mr. Stewart: None. However, and as indicated in the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health on 15 April 1994, *Official Report*, column *315*, the Department of Health is continuing to liaise with my Department on the placement of individual casualties.

Health Service Staff

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what staff were employed in all aspects of the health service except in general practice in each health board area as at 1 January in each year since 1992 *(a)* on professional administration of the service, with no direct medical or nursing responsibilities, *(b)* as practising medical staff and *(c)* as practising nursing staff; and what was the cost of salaries and related expenses of each of the three categories in each of the last three years.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* The latest information available is shown in the tables. Staff figures are as at 30 September whereas salary costs are only available at 31 March each year.

Selected NHS staff in post by health board: whole time equivalent: as at 30 September 1993

Health board	Administration and clerical	Management[1]	Grade 1-6	Other[2]	Medical[3]	Nursing staff[4]	Excluding nurses in training
Scotland	18,538·6	2,063·0	16,163·8	311·8	6,426·6	58,454·9	53,390·5
Argyll and Clyde	1,400·0	123·0	1,273·0	4·0	389·8	4,548·8	4,245·0
Ayrshire and Arran	956·9	113·4	842·5	1·0	339·1	3,261·7	3,055·6
Borders	271·7	27·9	243·8	—	90·0	1,132·1	1,010·3
Dumfries and Galloway	463·5	51·5	412·0	—	143·2	1,858·9	1,700·5
Fife	920·2	107·5	811·7	1·0	263·6	3,318·8	3,081·3
Forth Valley	757·6	91·4	665·2	1·0	235·7	3,335·9	3,112·3
Grampian	1,635·9	200·9	1,435·0	—	649·3	5,686·2	5,249·2
Greater Glasgow	3,799·9	340·9	3,459·0	—	1,745·8	12,679·0	11,597·0
Highlands	651·8	85·0	563·8	3·0	207·7	2,212·7	2,042·7
Lanarkshire	1,239·7	114·7	1,125·0	—	462·4	4,963·6	4,565·6
Lothian	2,634·8	268·8	2,366·0	—	1,194·8	8,595·7	7,432·4
Orkney	33·0	6·0	27·0	—	6·1	232·9	226·9
Shetland	59·2	8·0	51·2	—	12·1	221·2	210·2
Tayside	1,478·0	147·0	1,330·0	1·0	601·1	5,572·7	5,026·8
Western Isles	88·3	18·6	69·7	—	18·0	342·8	342·8
CSA	2,108·2	349·4	1,458·0	300·8	59·4	186·4	186·4
State Hospital	39·9	9·0	30·9	—	8·6	305·4	305·4

Selected NHS staff in post by health board: whole time equivalent: as at 30 September 1992

Health board	Administration and clerical	Management[1]	Grade 1-6	Other[2]	Medical[3]	Nursing staff[4]	Excluding nurses in training
Scotland	17,640·6	1,660·7	15,681·9	298·0	6,339·8	61,651·6	53,678·2
Argyll and Clyde	1,370·5	104·5	1,262·0	4·0	370·6	4,762·1	4,286·1
Ayrshire and Arran	913·3	89·1	824·2	—	321·2	3,405·6	3,037·6
Borders	257·4	23·9	233·5	—	85·4	1,152·5	999·1
Dumfries and Galloway	441·8	47·9	393·9	—	137·1	1,911·3	1,659·3
Fife	800·0	81·0	718·0	1·0	263·6	3,406·8	3,022·8
Forth Valley	715·9	68·4	646·5	1·0	240·3	3,557·7	3,193·7
Grampian	1,581·7	175·7	1,406·0	—	635·7	6,064·0	5,428·5
Greater Glasgow	3,679·1	271·1	3,408·0	—	1,793·6	13,665·0	11,733·0
Highland	627·4	70·0	554·4	3·0	207·7	2,346·5	2,096·5
Lanarkshire	1,158·6	79·6	1,079·0	—	469·5	5,172·6	4,532·6
Lothian	2,417·1	181·1	2,236·0	—	1,143·6	8,997·9	7,312·5
Orkney	31·3	6·0	25·3	—	5·9	225·1	214·1
Shetland	54·5	8·0	46·5	—	8·5	216·5	205·5
Tayside	1,509·0	138·0	1,371·0	—	574·0	5,942·2	5,143·2
Western Isles	79·3	12·0	66·3	1·0	16·9	300·5	288·5
CSA	1,971·4	297·4	1,386·0	288·0	60·0	197·5	197·5
State Hospital	32·3	7·0	25·3	—	6·2	327·8	327·8

Selected NHS staff in post by health board: whole time equivalent: as at 30 September 1991

Health board	Administration and clerical	Management[1]	Grade 1-6	Other[2]	Medical[3]	Nursing staff[4]	Excluding nurses in training
Scotland	16,584·5	1,298·3	15,000·2	286·0	6,202·9	63,503·3	53,521·7
Argyll and Clyde	1,231·0	80·0	1,149·0	2·0	359·5	4,888·3	4,216·3
Ayrshire and Arran	846·5	58·0	788·5	—	301·1	3,567·2	3,109·2
Borders	236·9	19·0	217·9	—	80·2	1,156·5	988·9
Dumfries and Galloway	412·4	35·2	376·2	1·0	128·2	1,925·3	1,643·7
Fife	768·9	74·6	694·3	—	252·7	3,506·8	3,001·8
Forth Valley	665·9	60·0	604·9	1·0	239·2	3,571·0	3,077·0
Grampian	1,488·7	133·7	1,355·0	—	632·0	6,066·5	5,312·5
Greater Glasgow	3,511·2	218·2	3,292·0	1·0	1,761·1	14,436·0	11,735·0
Highland	593·5	50·0	540·5	3·0	203·6	2,443·4	2096·9
Lanarkshire	1,097·0	63·0	1,034·0	—	449·0	5,499·1	4,717·1
Lothian	2,355·0	135·0	2,220·0	—	1,128·3	9,152·4	7,380·4
Orkney	30·2	6·0	24·2	—	5·5	223·5	206·5
Shetland	49·6	8·0	41·6	—	9·5	226·4	216·4
Tayside	1,399·5	111·5	1,288·0	—	576·1	6,045·8	5,054·8
Western Isles	64·9	11·0	52·9	1·0	13·1	306·4	276·4
CSA	1,808·1	233·1	1,298·0	277·0	60·1	193·5	193·5
State Hospital	25·2	2·0	23·2	—	3·7	295·3	295·3

[1] Includes general managers, unit general managers, senior managers, staff on grades 7-10 and staff on protected grades.
[2] Includes ambulance officers, ambulance control assistants, management trainees and staff on non-Whitley grades.
[3] Excludes GPs and locums, 1993 data are provisional.
[4] With the introduction of the "1992" courses of preparation, new student nurses ceased to be employed by the NHS and instead receive a bursary. This has resulted in a rapid drop in the NHS-employed student numbers. There were 8,161·8 basic students and pupils directly employed in 1991, 6,278·9 in 1992 and 3,845·7 in 1993. There were 1,403 students receiving bursaries indexed on "1992" courses in 1992 and 3,617 in 1993.

Salaries and Wages (£000)

Financial year	*Administration and Clerical*[1]	*Medical Staff*[2]	*Nursing Staff*
1991-92	196,122	259,616	919,706
1992-93	225,711	289,187	974,228

[1] No figures are available for "Professional administration of the Service, with no direct medical or nursing responsibilities" as this is not separately identified in the Scottish Health Authorities annual accounts. The figures supplied are the *total* Salaries and Wages for Administration and include those senior nurses and clinicians who have transferred to general/senior manager pay scales.
[2] Includes Specialists.

Ayrshire and Arran Health Board

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money Ayrshire and Arran health board spent launching, publishing, promoting and distributing its "Charter for Health"; and how much money Ayrshire and Arran health board is spending on the newly created post of consumer feedback manager.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 5 May 1994]:* The cost to Ayrshire and Arran health board of the relaunch of its "Charter for Health" was just over £7,000. The post of consumer feedback manager has been in existence for two years. The actual salary involved is a matter between the board and the individual concerned.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money Ayrshire and Arran health board is spending on promoting general practitioner fundholding within the local area; and what remuneration it is paying to the general practitioner appointed to promote general practitioner fundholding within its area.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 5 May 1994]:* The costs to Ayrshire and Arran health board, in line with other boards, of promoting general practitioner fundholding are largely indirect costs and are not separately identifiable within the overall health board expenditure.

The general practitioner appointed by Ayrshire and Arran health board to promote general practitioner fundholding in its area is being remunerated for two sessions a month, until March 1995, at £86 per session. This is a standard rate for general practitioners employed on specific projects by the health board as agreed with the British Medical Association.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement indicating what assessment he has made of the general practitioner fundholding system operating throughout the Ayrshire and Arran health board area.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 5 May 1994]:* Currently there are four fundholding practices operating within the board area. These practices are using the scheme to improve the health care and range of services available to patients. Participation in the GP fundholding scheme by GP practices is voluntary.

Council Tax

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many appeals against valuations against council tax have been lodged; how many appeals have been considered; how many appeals have been successful; and what is the average amount of time taken to consider an appeal against valuation in each valuation area in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 5 May 1994]:* The table provides the available information, which relates to all classes of proposals to change the valuation list made to assessors and subsequent appeals. The table, which is taken from information supplied by assessors, shows the position at November 1993 for all areas, and the position at March 1994 for those areas for which information is, at present, available.

Number of proposals/appeals and their progress (i)

Region	*Position at November 1993*				*Position at March 1994*			
	Number of proposals/ appeals lodged	*Number settled*	*Number where list adjusted/ appeal allowed*	*Average time from date of lodgement to date of settlement (ii)*	*Number of proposals/ appeals lodged*	*Number settled*	*Number where list adjusted/ appeal allowed*	*Average time from date of lodgement to date of settlement (ii)*
		Number		*Months*		*Number*		*Months*
Borders	2,996	254	217	4	3,057	685	522	8
Central	2,719	422	378	4	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Dumfries and Galloway	3,048	1,077	803	3	3,136	1,860	1,251	4
Fife	6,411	3,136	1,854	5	6,542	4,606	2,722	5
Grampian	11,221	3,956	2,788	5	11,423	6,282	4,231	6
Highland	5,991	1,470	931	4	6,093	3,556	2,327	6
Lothian	11,739	2,077	1,422	6	12,866	5,961	3,956	7
Strathclyde	39,463	15,606	12,498	3	40,252	23,358	17,828	4
Tayside	11,171	1,113	986	5	11,364	3,261	2,693	6
Orkney	211	166	101	3	215	211	120	3
Shetland	159	114	95	2	174	154	108	3
Western Isles	837	227	125	5	865	513	283	7
Scotland	95,966	29,618	22,198	4	—	—	—	—

Source: Information supplied by Assessors in regular statistical returns.

Medical Treatment (Complaints)

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what statutory procedures currently exist for pursuing a complaint against medical treatment received under the national health service; and what plans he has to amend the current statutory status of local health councils.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 5 May 1994]:* My right hon. Friend has issued directions under the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978 and the Hospital Complaints Procedure Act 1985 requiring health boards and NHS trusts to operate procedures for investigating complaints about treatment received in hospital. The National Health Service (Service Committees and Tribunal) (Scotland) Regulations 1992 prescribe procedures to be followed in investigating complaints where it is alleged that a general medical practitioner has failed to comply with his terms of service. The Health Service Commissioners Act 1993 empowers the Health Service Commissioner for Scotland to investigate certain types of complaints made to him where it is alleged that a person has sustained injustice or hardship as a result of treatment provided under the national health service.

There are no plans to amend the current statutory status of local health councils.

School Transport

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the costs arising from his decision to allow Strathclyde council to end the dispensation allowing three children to share a two-seater seat in respect of school buses and coaches; and what were the costs of the other safety measures affecting school transport recently introduced by Strathclyde regional council.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The decision by Strathclyde regional council in March 1994 to end the three for two rule on vehicles used for the transportation of school children in their area and to introduce a number of other measures was entirely a matter for the regional council. In figures provided to the Scottish Office, the council has estimated that the cost arising from such measures in 1994-95 is £1·72 million.

Ayrshire and Arran Community Health Trust

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland for what purpose David Fraser and Mervyn Gunn of the Ayrshire and Arran community health trust met Scottish Office officials on Thursday 14 April; what connection this meeting had with the subsequent resignation of Mervyn Gunn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* No such meeting took place.

Local Government

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what safeguards he is planning for the funding of welfare rights, money advice centres and voluntary organisations following the dismantling of regional councils and social work committees.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* The Government value highly the work of voluntary organisations and wish to ensure a smooth handover from the existing to the new authorities. For this reason, the Scottish Office will issue guidance to the new authorities on the key role of voluntary organisations and the importance of avoiding disruption. In addition, the Scottish Office will direct existing authorities to inform shadow authorities of all funding which is given to voluntary organisations by means of grants, service agreements, contracts and so on. This direction will ensure that the shadow authorities are aware of the full extent of funding of voluntary organisations including annual grants being paid to voluntary organisations in 1994-95.

Care Services

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what evidence he has of local authorities failing to consider quality of care and value for money when purchasing or supplying care services.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* While local authorities clearly consider issues of quality and value for money, the cost of their directly provided residential care is significantly higher than similar provision available from the private sector which meets the quality standards of registration. Residential care is a major component of local authority community care expenditure.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list *(a)* the advantages and *(b)* the disadvantages to users of care services provided by (i) the private sector, (ii) the volunary sector and (iii) local authorities.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* Good qulaity community care services are available in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors. Authorities should seek to offer clients a choice of services from a range of providers which meet their needs and offer good value.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library a list of the individuals and groups who have made representations to him about the purchase of care services from the private sector by local authorities.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* No. Many representations have been received and could not be listed individually without disproportionate cost.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy in the long run for the involvement of local authorities in the provision of care services.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* Local authorities will continue to have a role as providers of community care services, but, in order to maximise choice and value for money, they should both distinguish between their roles as purchasers and providers and make full use of the independent sector.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his intended circular and formal directions to local authorities on community care plans.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* Appropriate bodies have recently been consulted on draft guidance and directions which would require local authorities to include in their community care plans

statements showing *(a)* the planned volumes and types of care services to be purchased *(b)* the estimated costs of such purchases and *(c)* the proportion of their total proposed expenditure to be incurred on purchases from the independent sector. Responses are being considered.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportions of local authorities' expenditure on care services he expects to be devoted to purchases from the independent sector, the voluntary sector and to in-house provisions.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 May 1994:]* These proportions should be determined locally in the light of availability of services and as a result of authorities purchasing good-quality services from whichever provider meets the needs and wishes of clients within a reasonable cost.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which care services he intends should be subject to formal tendering; and which would be accepted for spot purchasing.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* These are matters for local authorities to determine in the light of local needs and circumstances.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what experience and qualifications he will require from new providers of *(a)* residential care and *(b)* home helps.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* There are no statutory requirements for qualifications. However, all residential care homes have to be registered with the social work authorities and are regularly inspected by them.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in what geographical area of Scotland he considers there is not a real choice of care services; and where he intends to promote the development of the independent sector.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* The extent of choice varies from area to area and service to service. It is the Government's policy to widen the range of choice by encouraging the independent sector throughout Scotland.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library a list of the individuals and groups he has consulted on his draft paper advising local authorities of new requirements governing the content of their community care plans.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* My right hon. Friend is making arrangements to place the list in the Library.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what length of contract he deems appropriate for the provision of residential care.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 May 1994]:* That is a matter for local determination. In the case of individual contracts the length of contract will reflect individual needs.

Scottish Ambulance Service

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans the Scottish ambulance service has to pursue NHS trust status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 4 May 1994]:* The Scottish ambulance service has prepared an application for NHS trust status. I expect to make an announcement on the public consultation process shortly.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Act

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to undertake a fundamental review of the operation of the Child Support Act 1991.

Mr. Burt: We are keeping the operation of the Child Support Agency and policy under continuous review.

Incapacity Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will list the organisations responding to the consultation document on the medical test for incapacity benefit;

(2) how many of the responses to the consultation document on the medical test for incapacity benefit *(a)* were in favour of the approach outlined in that document and *(b)* expressed criticisms; and when he will publish the responses.

Mr. Scott: The table lists the organisations that have responded to the consultation document. All the responses have been helpful and we have taken account of them in the further development of the new test of incapacity. A report will be published in August summarising all the stages in the development of the test.

List of organisations responding to the consultation document

Aberdeen Mental Health Services Customer Group
Action on Disability
ACT-UP Manchester (Aids Coalition to unleash power)
ADSS Disabilities Committee
Age Concern
Alzheimer's Disease Society
Alzheimer's Scotland
Arthritis Care
Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus
Association of Directors of Social Work
Association of Disabled Professionals
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
Backpain Network
Bexley Association of Disabled People
Birmingham City Council welfare rights
Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council
Bradford Citizens Advice Bureau
Brighton Association of Tenants With Disabilities
Brighton, Hove and Lewes Mental Health Development Group
British Association of Social Workers
British Association of Social Workers Renal Special Interest Group
British Diabetic Association
British Epilepsy Association
British Institute of Industrial Therapy
British Migraine Association
British Retinitis Pigmentosa Society
British Society for Rehabilitation Medicine
Bromsgrove and Redditch Patients and Carers Forum for Mental Health
Camden Council Welfare Rights Unit
Cancer Relief MacMillan Fund
Carers National Association
Caring Costs
Chester Lodgings and Support Project
Child Poverty Action Group
Church Action on Poverty
City of Bradford Metropolitan Council welfare rights

City University Department of Systems Science
Cleveland County Council welfare rights
Cleveland Mental Health Support Group
Congleton Sector Planning Group for Mental Health
Consultation and Advocacy Promotion Service
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Crewe Welfare Rights Forum
Cystic Fibrosis Trust
Derbyshire Branch of the National Federation of the Blind of the UK
Derbyshire Centre for Integrated Living
Derbyshire County Council welfare rights
DIAL UK
Disabled Advice Bureau
Disabled Living Foundation
Disabilities Coalition (Boothferry, Glanford, Scunthorpe) Outreach Project
Disability Action Project
Disability Alliance
Disability Network
Disability Scotland
DISC Trinity Community Centre
Drumchapel Law and Money Advice Centre
Dumfries and Galloway Citizens Advice Bureau benefits advice project
Dundee Association for Mental Health
Dunfermline Forum on Disability
East Lothian Volunteer Bureau
East Suffolk Advocacy Network
East Suffolk MIND
Edinburgh Volunteer Exchange
Enfield Disability Information and Advice Project
Epilepsy Association of Scotland
First Steps to Freedom
Flint and District Trades Union Council
Friedrich's Ataxia Group
General Medical Services Committee
George House Trust
Grampian Action for Psychiatirc Services
Greater London Association of Disabled People
Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People
Great Yarmouth Borough Council welfare rights
Greenwich Association of Disabled People's Centre for Independent Living
Group for Improved Living for the Disabled
Headway National Head Injuries Association
Hereford and Worcester County Council
Herefordshire DIAL
Herefordshire Lifestyles
Hertfordshire County Council welfare benefits advice
Humberside Coalition of People With Disabilities
Humberside Committee for Employment of People with Disabilities
Ileostomy Association of GB and Ireland
Independent Living (1993)
Industrial Injuries Advisory Council
Island Disability Action Group
Isle of Wight County Council services for disabled people
Islington Community Aids Resources
Islington Council Welfare Rights
Joint Consultants Committee
Kent County Council, Dartford and Gravesham Area Advice Forum
Kent Turnaround Trading Ltd
Kingston Association of Disabled People
Kirkcaldy Forum on Disability
Lambeth Accord
Lancashire County Council Welfare Rights
Leeds Citizens Advice Bureau
Leeds City Council welfare benefits unit
Leicester City Council welfare rights
Lewes and District MIND
Link—Glasgow Association for Mental Health
Llanrumney Community Project
London Borough of Barnet Disablement Association
London Borough of Greenwich Anti Poverty Sub-Committee
London Borough of Lambeth
London Borough of Wandsworth welfare rights unit
London East Aids Network
Lucas Industries plc
Manchester and District Motor Neurone Disease Association
Manchester MIND
Manchester Royal Infirmary speech and language therapy unit
Manic Depression Fellowship
Manic Depression Fellowship (Scotland)
MENCAP
Mental Health Foundation
Merseyside Welfare Rights Resource Centre
MIND
MIND in Haringey
Mobility Trust
Multiple Sclerosis Society of GB and NI
Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre, Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire
Muscle Power
Myasthenia Gravis Association
NACAB
Nantwich and District Citizens Advice Bureau
Narcolepsy Association (UK)
National Advisory Council of Employers of People with Disabilities
National Association for Colitis Care and Crohn's Disease
National Asthma Campaign
National Back Pain Association
National Council for Hospice and Specialist Palliative Care Services
National Federation of the Blind of the UK disability income committee
National Kidney Federation
National Deaf-Blind League
National Union of Teachers
National League of the Blind and Disabled
National Schizophrenia Fellowship
Network for the Handicapped
Newcastle Mental Health Consumer Group
Newcastle Upon Tyne Council for the Disabled
Newham Anti Poverty and Welfare Rights Unit
Northern Back Exchange
North London ME Network
North Tyne Council of Employers of People with Disabilities
North Tyneside Council
North Tyneside Disability Advice Centre
North West London group of the National Schizophrenia Fellowship
North Yorkshire Welfare Benefits Unit
Norwich Branch of The National League of the Blind and Disabled
Nottingham Repetitive Strain Injury Support Group
Office of Population, Census and Surveys
Oxford MIND
Oxfordshire Welfare Rights
Parentability
Parkinson's Disease Society
Patient Initiatives
Pensioners and Disabled Alliance
Pheonix Day Hospital, Bury St. Edmunds, Psychiatric Rehabilitiation Services
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PLUS Self Help Association
Policy Studies Institute
Portsmouth Community Advice Centres
Powys Health Care NHS Trust
Professional Association of Teachers
RADAR
Renfrew District Disability Council
Repetitive Strain Injury Association
Richmond Fellowship Workschemes
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council advice service
Rolls-Royce plc
Rotherham Department of Social Services
Royal College of General Practitioners
Royal College of Nursing
Royal College of Physicians
Royal Liverpool University Hospital Trust
Royal London Society for the Blind
Royal National Institute of the Blind
Scottish Association for Mental Health
Scottish Churches Industrial Mission
Scottish Council for Single Homeless

Scottish Users Network (of mental health services)
Sheffield Visually Impaired Peoples Group
Southampton Centre for Independent Living Ltd.
South Glamorgan County Council mental health services
South West Region of the National Schizophrenia Fellowship
Spastics Society
Speech and Language Therapy Research Unit
St. Mungo Association
Stafford Centre
Stirling & District Association for Mental Health
Strathclyde Forum on Disability
Strathclyde Regional Council social work department
Suffolk County Council social services
Suffolk County Council, West Suffolk welfare rights group
Sunderland Citizens Advice Bureau
Terrence Higgins Trust
The Action Group
The Brighton and Hove Federation of the Disabled
The British Network of Clubhouses
The British Polio Fellowship
The British Psychological Society
The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
The Churches Council for Health and Healing
The Disablement Income Group
The Dystonia Society
The Enham Trust
The Law Society
The Leonard Cheshire Foundation
The Mental After Care Association
The National Association of Retired Police Officers
The Neurofibromatosis Association
The Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust
The Pain Society
The Royal College of Psychiatrists
The Royal London Trust and London Hospital Medical College
The Society of Occupational Medicine
The Stroke Association
Trades Union Congress
United Biscuits UK Ltd
University of Southampton, Rehabilitation Research Unit
University of York, Social Policy Research Unit
Wakerley Lodge Younger Disabled Unit
Wales Council for the Blind
Waltham Forest Consumer Protection Services
Waltham Forest DIAL
War Widows Association of Great Britain
Wells and District Group of the National Schizophrenia Fellowship
West Glamorgan County Council
West Suffolk Hospital mental health services
Whitchurch Hospital Rehabilitation Specialism
WinVisible
Worcester ME Support Group
Work Recovery Europe Ltd
Work Rehabilitation Consortium
Yeovil and Sherborne Branch of Multiple Sclerosis Society of GB and NI

Independent Tribunal Service

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action is being taken to speed up the review hearings for people awaiting the outstanding moneys due to them under the severely disabled premium awards.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the independent tribunal service is the responsibility of the president, His Honour Judge Thorpe. He will write to the hon. Member shortly.

EU Statistics

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of gross domestic product is spent on social security benefits for people unable to work because of sickness or disability in each of the member states of the European Union.

Mr. Scott: Comparable figures for expenditure on sickness benefits are not available in the form requested. The latest information available is in the Eurostat publication "Social Protection Expenditure and Receipts 1980-1991". This publication also shows expenditure on invalidity and disability for the same period.

The latest information available on invalidity/disability expenditure, shown as a percentage of gross domestic product for each member state of the European Union, is contained in the Eurostat publication "Digest of Statistics on Social Protection in Europe, Volume 2: Invalidity/ Disability". This publication covers the years 1980-1988 and includes information about differences of definition which highlight the need for care in interpreting the statistics for comparative purposes.

A copy of each publication has been placed in the Library.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of national average earnings is represented by the higher rate of statutory sick pay, at the latest available date.

Mr. Scott: As at April 1993, the latest date available, the higher rate of statutory sick pay was £52·50 per week, representing 16·6 per cent. of gross national average weekly earnings of £316·90.

Notes:

1. The earnings quoted are the average for all full-time adult employees and taken from the April 1993 New Earnings Survey (GB). The corresponding figure for April 1994 is not yet available.
2. Most SSP recipients get occupational sick pay in addition to SSP when they are sick. In many cases this brings the total payment received up to full pay.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of national average earnings is represented by the current average payment of invalidity benefit.

Mr. Scott: The average amount of invalidity benefit in payment on 4 April 1992, the latest date for which information is available was £75·45(i). This represents 24·8 per cent. of the gross average national earnings figure, £304·60(ii), for April 1992.

Notes:

(i) Based on a 1 per cent. sample of claimants in Great Britain, rounded to the nearest thousand.
(ii) Figure obtained from "The New Earnings Survey (GB)", April 1992.
(iii) Invalidity Benefit was uprated by 4·1 per cent. from 9 April 1992.

War Pensions

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current level of a full war pension; how many and what percentage of (i) men and (ii) women are currently in receipt of *(a)* the full war pension and *(b)* a reduced war pension; how many reviews of war pensions took place in the past five years; and how many war pensions were upgraded and downgraded as a result.

Mr. Hague: The available information is as follows: From week commencing 11 April 1994 the weekly rate of War Disablement Pension payable to a person assessed as 100 per cent. disabled, is £98·90 per week.

The amount payable may be increased where there is entitlement to additional allowances or supplements, eg. in respect of age, mobility or attendance requirements.

As of 31 March 1994, there were an estimated 245,445 War Disablement Pensions in payment; of these 13,648 (5·6 per cent.) were to 100 per cent. disabled pensioners, and 231,797 (94·4 per cent.) to pensioners with lesser disablement.

295,166 reviews of War Disablement Pensions have taken place from April 1989 to March 1994 and, as a result, 59,065 of these were upgraded and 588 were downgraded.

Polish Forces Pension Scheme

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications were made to his Department in 1993 for pensions under the Polish forces pensions scheme; and how many people are currently in receipt of payments under that scheme.

Mr. Hague: Some 673 applications were made in 1993. At 30 April 1994, 2,313 pensions were in payment.

Social Fund

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the outstanding balance of loans and grants of the Lewisham and Brixton district social fund for the financial year 1993-94; how many applications for a grant were refused, giving the reasons for refusal; how many applications for a loan were refused, giving the reasons for refusal; how many applicants refused went on to appeal; and how many of these appeals were successful.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 5 May 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the Social Fund (SF) in the Benefits Agency's (BA) Lewisham and Brixton District.

The balance outstanding on the Social Fund budgets at Lewisham and Brixton District as at 31 March 1994 at the end of the financial year was £295·36 for grants and £19,267·36 for loans. This is an expenditure of 99·97 per cent. and 99·4 per cent. respectively.

With regard to the number of grant and loan applications refused in the District, at the end of the financial year 1993-94 the numbers of grant and loan applications refused were 8,875 and 1,475 respectively.

The Social Fund Computer System (SFCS), introduced to Lewisham and Brixton in July 1993, collects different statistics compared to the old system and are not directly comparable with previous years. The old system recorded reasons for refusal per application whereas the SFCS records reasons for refusal per item applied for, most applications being for more than one item. As such, in cases where a partial award is made, a reason for refusal will also be appropriate. Therefore, the sum of all reasons for refusal will not equal the number of application refusals. The reasons for item refusal are given at Annex A.

There is no right of appeal against discretionary SF decisions. Applicants dissatisfied with a decision may seek a review of the decision and this is initially conducted within the District. If still dissatisfied, the applicant can ask for a review by the Independent Review Service (IRS) which is independent of the BA.

For the period 1 April 1993 to 31 March 1994, 4,006 review applications were received by Lewisham and Brixton District. These figures include those that requested a review by the IRS. Overall, 1,188 resulted in a changed decision.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Appendix A

Details of grant and loan refusals for the Lewisham and Brixton District: 1 April 1993 to 31 March 1994 (latest available data).

Reason for Refusal	*Grants*	*Loans*
Not in receipt of Income Support (IS)	2,362	2,167
In receipt of IS for less than 26 weeks	—	5,281
Direction 4 not satisfied	25,067	—
Applicant excluded by Directions	—	31
No serious risk to health or safety	—	2,382
Requested amount below minimum allowable	14	254
Repeat application	547	1,545
Item excluded by Directions	316	1,404
Alternative item available	57	289
Help available from another source	83	363
Grant awarded on loan request	—	1,492
Savings over £500 meet cost	5	7
Savings over £1,000 meet cost (customer or partner over 60)	7	1
Enough money available to meet crisis	—	17
Total debt exceeds £1,000	—	68
Inability to repay	—	1,738
Insufficient priority	390	943
Other reasons	27	135

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fruit

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what representations she has had urging her to support an EC orchard grubbing grant; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what representations she has made to EC authorities about the consequences for United Kingdom apple and pear growers of national aids to assist producers in other EC countries;

(3) what representations she has received urging more action by the EC and GATT authorities to exclude dumped fruit from non-EC sources from the EC;

(4) if she will make a statement on the representations received and action taken by her Department on the market in the United Kingdom for United Kingdom Cox apples.

Mr. Jack: I have received several representations about the United Kingdom apple industry from a variety of industry organisations, individual growers and hon. Members.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my noble Friend Earl Howe, during the debate on apple growing on Friday 29 April *Official Report, House of Lords,* columns 995-1002, which gives a clear statement of our position on the various points raised.

Norway (Fishing Rights)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list each aspect of the Norwegian EU accession treaty relating to the management, control, catches and policing regime for fishing permitted to Norway in *(a)* southern and *(b)* northern waters under the transitional regime; and what are the comparable provisions for the United Kingdom at the present time.

Mr. Jack: In waters south of 62 deg north—the North sea, Skagerrak, Irish sea and west of Scotland and Ireland —fish stocks will be managed by the European Union from the date of Norwegian accession, but in the Norwegian

sector of the North sea for one year the current Norwegian technical measures and control system will apply and for three years the current discard ban will apply. Norwegian quotas are fixed as the average shares of each stock over the period 1989 to 1993.

The United Kingdom quotas for joint EC-Norwegian stocks in waters south of 62 deg north are calculated on the same reference period as for Norway and thus consolidate the existing relative stability shares. The United Kingdom's control, management and technical conservation measures, applied within the framework of the common fisheries policy, are unaffected by the treaty of Norwegian accession.

In waters north of 62 deg north, Norway will maintain her management responsibility for fish stocks, including negotiations with Russia, until July 1998, after which the European Union will assume management responsibility. The current Norwegian technical measures will apply for one year but for three years the current control system, discard ban, and system of opening and closing fisheries in biologically sensitive zones will apply.

Norwegian and United Kingdom quotas are fixed as the average shares of each stock over the period 1989 to 1993 except for north-east arctic cod and mackerel where the quotas are fixed at the same percentages as in 1994. The United Kingdom's control, management and technical conservation measures in the area of United Kingdom waters north of 62 deg north are unaffected by the treaty of Norwegian accession.

Warble Fly

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of warble fly there have been in each year since 1990; and from which countries the infected animals originated in each case.

Mr. Soames: The table shows the number of clinical cases in each year together with the number of animals which were positive in blood tests for the presence of warble fly larva.

	Clinical cases	*seropositive*
1990	1	0
1991	0	0
1992	0	4
1993	207	298
1994	37	0

The cases in 1990 and 1992 were not linked to imports. In 1993, all cases were found in cattle imported from France, apart from one clinical case imported from Belgium.

The 37 clinical cases of warble fly confirmed to date are in cattle imported from France all of which are being re-exported.

Arable Farming (Wales)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) when she next plans to visit Wales; and if she will make a statement concerning the recent losses to cereal growers in the less-favoured areas in Wales as compared with England;

(2) if she will visit Wales in order to study the relative effect of arable aid payments to farmers in Wales as against those in England; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friend has made no plans to visit Wales in the near future.

Decisions on arable regionalisation for the United Kingdom under the arable area payments scheme are taken jointly by my right hon. Friends the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. They decided that for 1994 it was in the best interests of the United Kingdom as a whole for each country to determine the yield regions within its own boundaries.

The decision to divide Wales into less-favoured areas and non-LFA yield regions was taken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales in order to bring levels of compensation for the majority of specialist cereal growers in Wales closer to those in England. I understand, however, that no Welsh cereal grower will receive less this year than last, subject to any changes in the green rate in force on 1 July 1994 which will be used to calculate payments.

Animal Identification

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she plans to publish information concerning the new arrangements for the EC directive on animal identification; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Following the major consultation exercise with the industry last year on how to implement the EC directive on animal identification, EEC 92/102, we have been in close and regular contact with industry organisations on the detailed arrangements. Our aim is to achieve a smooth transition to the new arrangements and to that end we have decided to allow an extra three months between 1 July and 30 September 1994 during which calves may be marked with either the new or old-style ear tags. From 1 October only the new-style tags should be used. To publicise the new arrangements we shall be running a poster campaign at livestock markets and taking advertisements in the farming press and all livestock farmers will be sent a leaflet.

Deer (Tuberculosis)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list by region, the number of cases of tuberculosis in deer in each year since 1985.

Mr. Soames: The number of cases of confirmed bovine tuberculosis in deer in England which were notified to my department between 1985 and 1993 were:

	Eastern	*Midlands and Western*	*Northern*	*South Eastern*	*South Western*
1985	nil	nil	nil	2	1
1986	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil
1987	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil
1988	2	nil	nil	3	nil

	Eastern	Midlands and Western	Northern	South Eastern	South Western
1989	nil	nil	nil	3	2
1990	nil	1	nil	2	7
1991	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil
1992	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil
1993	nil	nil	nil	nil	1

There were an additional seven cases of confirmed bovine tuberculosis in deer in Great Britain between 1984 and 1986 and two in 1988. Details on these are not readily available.

Animal Transportation

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will outline the regulations covering those permitted to transport live animals for slaughter within *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the EC; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Article 5.2(a) of directive 91/628/EEC requires member states to ensure that the person in charge of an animal transport undertaking entrusts the transport to staff who possess the necessary knowledge to administer any appropriate care to the animals. This provision is implemented in this country by article 5(a) of the Welfare of Animals during Transport Order 1992.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many sheep died during a crossing on the night of 25 April from Portsmouth to Le Havre; what was the cause of those deaths; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: A transport company has reported that 39 sheep died in this incident. An investigation is being conducted by Hampshire county council and the Ministry.

Woodlands

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make it her policy to allow for woodland planting on set-aside land for the purpose of establishing new woodlands in the United Kingdom; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friend the Minister has long been arguing for the EC rules to be changed to allow woodland planting on set-aside land. As a result, the European Commission is now looking into the possibility.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 242**

SESSION 1993–94

25th April—6th May 1994

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This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc., between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

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Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates, etc.* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions.*

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Comm = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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